

THE ROUE.

Were you, ye fair, but cautious whom ye trust,
So many of your sex would not in vain,
Of broken vows and faithless men complain.

Rowe.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THIS WORK
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY
INSCRIBED
TO ONE,
WHOSE CONDUCT AND INFLUENCE
ARE RECOMMENDED
AS THE BEST AND SUREST MEANS FOR
THE REFORMATION OF A
ROUÉ.

THE ROUÉ.

INTRODUCTION.

- To feel

We are not what we have been ; and to deem
We are not what we should be ; and to steel
The heart against itself ; and to conceal,
With a proud caution, love, or hate, or aught—
Passion or feeling—purpose, grief, or zeal ;
Which is the tyrant spirit of our thought,
Is a stern task of soul—no matter—it is taught.

BYRON.

How many of the genuine feelings of human nature have been repressed and spoiled by the coldness of those outward forms which constitute so great a proportion of our education !

We enter into the world with buoyant feelings, fresh and “thick-coming fancies,” enthusiastic anticipation—with hearts and hands open to the impression and impulses of love, friend-

ship, and generosity, and with a multitude of senses and passions, all promising pleasure in their pursuit and their gratification.

We feel the genuine tears of sympathy spring into our eyes at a tale of distress ; and while

The world to our unpractised hearts
A flattering prospect shows ;
Our fancy forms a thousand schemes
Of gay delights and golden dreams,
And undisturb'd repose :

we find our young pulses bounding with delight at the sight of beauty, and experience a thousand sensations which impel us to an intimate intercourse of hearts with our fellow-creatures ; and the first thing we are taught in life, is to unlearn these early lessons of our nature : to repress these delightful springings of the heart—

To shut up all the passages of joy—

and to substitute the coldness of educated ceremony for these bursts of genuine feelings. We are taught to repress our generosity, to

Love is no longer the buoyant, pure, and generous passion, that has excited the hearts which experienced it to the greatest actions to accomplish its gratification; but is a mere word generally used, only because it is found in the vocabulary of our language with a particular meaning attached to it, as certain law-terms are still in vogue, although the spirit which rendered them necessary has long since expired. Like those who by artificial light put out that of the day; so have we, by borrowed forms and fashions, destroyed the sunlight of our own natural and best feelings:

And Love's and Friendship's finely-pointed dart
Fall blunted from each indurated heart.

In short, love, friendship, feeling of every kind, are all under the prescriptive rules of society. Young men are educated with the view to making or increasing their fortune by marriage; and young women, with no other idea than that of forming an establishment. This is, perhaps, more applicable to the latter than to the former; since the very first lesson a woman receives, is

to disguise her real sentiments: this engenders artifice; artifice in time, annihilates the feeling which originally existed; and instead of the noble, generous nature of woman—for her nature is noble and generous—we have the sophisticated pieces of animated 'wax-work, which form the aggregate of female society: fair and pure to look upon, as the drifted snow, and generally quite as cold.

I appeal to my female readers,—if they do not throw my book down with indignation at the last sentence,—whether they have no recollection of the first budding feelings of their heart being thus repressed by some prim mahogany governess,—some starched prude who put her conventional notions of propriety upon the first sensibilities of their nature, precisely in the same manner as she put the back-board upon their shoulders, or their feet into the stocks. But what a pity is it, that as their forms swell into the full maturity of beauty, and when the bubbling feelings of the heart ought to grow into generous passion, that these feelings should retrograde under a discipline which withers them

into inanity ! What a pity, that, as their lovely forms expand, their minds and hearts should contract ; that, as they become more capable of bestowing and of receiving enjoyment from their natural feelings, that these feelings should, like their flowing tresses, be subjected to the curling-irons of ceremony ! What a pity that love should be taught to be considered as crime ; that enthusiasm should be proscribed as folly ; and that conventional ceremony, and *les choses convenables*, should be the only things impressed upon the minds of youthful females, as of consequence to be observed !

What a number of noble creatures are thus spoiled ! How many of our best and purest pleasures are thus marred ! How many of the solaces and resources of mankind ruined ! How many 'generous mothers and affectionate wives perverted ; while man is condemned to take a cold creature of ceremony to his arms instead of a woman warm with all the mind and heart and feeling with which nature had endowed her, for the purpose of delighting his senses, in health and happiness—and soothing

his pains and anxieties, in sickness and in sorrow !
Enthusiasm seems scouted as much as though it meant, in our acceptation of it, the literal translation of the Greek word, which Voltaire renders by the words *émotion d'entrailles* : if it did it literally mean nothing more, it could not be more avoided than it is at present.

And yet, perhaps, when we look through the world and observe the various arts which the insidious and vicious of the other sex spread around them, this coldness may be deemed necessary as a defence ; and mothers and governesses find an excuse for the repression of feeling in the dangers to which it is exposed.

The apology for this is indeed to be found in the coquetry of woman, and in the heartlessness of man.

It has been observed by poetical botanists, that there is not a flower that has not a worm ready to prey upon and destroy its beauties ; and thus it is that a young heart seldom gives way to warm and generous impulses, without finding some one heartless enough to take advantage of these young and inexperienced feel-

ings; and who having excited, too often betrays them by desertion.

A young man goes inexperienced into society—admires some beauty—and, encouraged by her conduct, gives up his whole soul to his first love. The moment, however, he has completed her triumph by a declaration of his passion, he finds that it has been bestowed upon a heartless *coquette*, who cares not for the pang she has inflicted, and derides the affection she has inspired.

A girl with a warm and feeling heart is sought by some *Roué*, whose sole aim is to inspire a passion which it is never his intention to gratify. He does everything but declare himself.—The nature of his attentions—the tone of his voice—everything conveys an indication of his love; but he keeps just out of that pale, within which he knows if he passes, his explicit purpose must be declared; and he thus leads on a young heart, “sick with deferred hope,” till he quits it to weep that it should have devoted its earliest, purest, and best feelings to such a worthless coxcomb.

There is, however, a medium between the coldness of mere conventional propriety, and the unrepressed exuberance of nature. Let a sound judgment be placed as a sentinel upon the feelings, and they will be more likely to lead to happiness than if totally repressed.

We would have women creatures of nature, as well as of education: we would have their hearts as well as their heads cultivated, and not find them as they now too often are,—flowers, like those discovered by our late travellers to the North Pole, beautiful to the eye, but enclosed in an icicle, which in melting destroyed them.¹

¹ Captain Lyon's Journal.

CHAPTER I.

A CONTRAST.

———girl, so cold and pure,
Sober, steadfast, and demure,
Forget thyself to marble ———

—a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair ;
Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks and wreathed smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek.

MILTON.

“FOR shame! for shame! Agnes, to come bursting into the room so rudely, and with your hair all hanging about so negligently:—is that like a lady?” exclaimed Lady Pomeroy; as her niece, a lively dark-eyed girl of about ten years of age, with a profusion of black curls waving in natural ringlets over her dark but clear fore-

head, came jumping and laughing into "the dining-parlour, to partake of the dessert, and of a parental kiss after dinner.

"Why do you not imitate your sister Amelia? —you see she does not come in such a hurry," pursued the same lady, as her eye turned towards the door with an approving glance at a fine fair-haired girl of eleven, who walked quietly and demurely into the room, and dropping a D'Egville curtsey at her entrance, made the round of the table; turning first one cheek, and then the other, to her parents and her aunt, without the possibility of discomposing either the economy of her own ringlets, or, like her sister, disturbing anybody by her boisterous caresses.

"Your aunt speaks truly, Agnes," said her father; "you are growing too old to give way to this childishness, and you will indeed do well to begin to imitate the manners of Amelia."

The buoyant spirit of the youthful Agnes was, for a moment, checked by the reproof of her aunt, and by the severe glance of her father; but it soon revived, when she looked

timidly into the face of her mother, who gazed tenderly and half pityingly on her, as she pressed her warmly to her bosom, when she came to her end of the table, a place she invariably sought the last; because there she was sure to gain a small portion of her mother's chair, and fruit; and with her she could chat and laugh, and give vent to all the childish and volatile spirits with which nature had blessed her.

“ You should consider, my dear,” said the mother in an apologetic tone, “ that Agnes has not had the advantage that Amelia possesses in living so much with her aunt; and consequently, her spirits are not so much under control: neither has she enjoyed the tuition of D'Egville, to regulate her movements, nor of Crivelli to modulate her voice, nor a number of other privileges which the kindness of Lady Pomeroy has procured for her sister.”

These words were accompanied with a glance which almost bespoke an admiration and a love of the little being who was the subject of her apology, greater than that which

she felt for her whose superiority her words acknowledged.

But there was an appearance of melancholy, almost allied to pity, in this glance, which would have given an attentive observer the idea that she was looking into futurity, and dreading the effects of that acute sensibility which formed the principal characteristic of the young Agnes. Perhaps, at this moment, her memory glanced back to the time when her own heart leaped and bounded with all the young energies of incipient feeling ;—when the tear of pity, or the smile of gladness, was always ready to spring, at the slightest call, to her own lips and eyes. Perhaps, too, her imagination traced, with that power which it has of collecting and remembering the events and condensing results of whole years into the space of a moment, the long series of coldness by which all these young feelings had been checked and deadened, from the period of her sacrificing her first love at the shrine of filial duty and affection, to that in which she was now sitting, herself the mother of a being

possessed of all those feelings, by the encouragement and the subsequent blight of which she had been condemned to a life of perpetual probation ; and she almost wished that the heart of her darling Agnes was as cold as the world in which it was created to exist.

“ It is time, Mrs. Fleming,” said her husband in his formal and imperturbable manner, “ that Agnes should enjoy the advantages you speak of. Nature may do well enough for the *canaille*, but I would have my daughter well taught, and well bred ; and we cannot be too much obliged to my sister Lady Pomeroy, for the infinite pains she has taken with Amelia. Lady Pomeroy, will you send D’Egville to Mrs. Fleming to-morrow ? ”

Lady Pomeroy, who was quite as much an advocate for artificial education as her brother, gladly undertook the task. Mrs. Fleming, as usual, did not object, though she thought the natural movements of her darling Agnes far more graceful than any that could be given by art ; while Agnes herself only saw in the proposition the delight of having a dancing-mas-

ter, without anticipating the restraint her hitherto free limbs were condemned to undergo.

The indulgence, however, of any appearance of extravagant pleasure, was repressed by the frowns of her father, and by her aunt's directing her to imitate the quiet and lady-like behaviour of her sister, who divided her fruit, and sipped her wine, as though she had no pleasure in partaking of them; and dipped her taper fingers into the crystal finger-glass with all the airs and graces of a little woman of fashion.

It had been fixed that they should this evening visit the theatre; and notwithstanding all her mother's coaxing and hushing, Agnes could not restrain her impatience at the delay of the carriage; she started at every sound, with an exclamation of "There it is!" and on each disappointment, rather vehemently expressed her fear of being too late.

All this was frowned at by her father, and nodded down by her aunt; while Amelia felt, or at least betrayed, no impatience or any anticipation of pleasure.

At length the carriage was announced. Agnes sprang from her mother's knee ; her shawl was thrown hastily round her shoulders, without any regard to appearance or form ; -and she was in the hall and ready to depart, while her sister's maid was still folding a cashmere gracefully on the neck of Amelia, under the superintendence of Lady Pomeroy.

In spite of the delays occasioned by the ceremony of dressing out her sister, and of her father's methodical movements, which to the imagination of poor Agnes, seemed to proceed in doubly-slow time this evening, they arrived at the theatre just as the curtain was rising.

Agnes could scarcely repress her delight as she first caught a glimpse of the stage from the private-box ; for Mr. Fleming's ideas of propriety would not permit the close contact with strangers, which is occasioned by the occupation of a public one ; though Agnes could not help fancying that she should see much better in front of the theatre, than from one of the sides, where she was perpetually stretching

her neck out of the box, to the great discomfiture of her father, and to the horror of her well-bred aunt.

To her, the scene was a new one, and every part of it afforded her pleasure; the people—the chandeliers—the house—the scenery—by turns extorted exclamations of childish delight; and she was perpetually directing her mother's attention, who alone heeded her, to one or other of the objects which excited her admiration.

In the mean time, Amelia sat in the front of the box, with the folds of her cashmere undisturbed; the pride of her father and aunt, and certainly very beautiful.

As the play proceeded, the raptures of Agnes subsided: she became silent and attentive—wrapt up in the scene she was witnessing, her whole soul seemed absorbed in the horrors of the tragedy before them; when, to the consternation of Lady Pomeroy, at a moment when the whole house was wrapt in silent admiration of the powers of Mrs. Siddons, poor Agnes burst into a convulsive fit of tears, which

were beyond her power to restrain or control, and her tender mother was obliged to hush her to tranquillity in a retired part of the box, by repeated representations that the scene was but fictitious.

It was some time, however, before she could imagine that all which she had seen was not real ; nor did she quite overcome her feelings of terror and regret at the catastrophe of Isabella, until the humours of the harlequinade which followed, again absorbed her attention.

Here again her laughter at the tricks of the clown and pantaloon ; her surprise at the agility of Harlequin and Columbine ; and her childish exclamations of wonder at metamorphoses, which seemed to realise all that she had read in the Fairy Tales that constituted part of her infantine library, once more offended the punctilious *bienseance* of Lady Pomeroy.

During the whole exhibition, Amelia sat apparently an attentive spectator ; but her cold and beautiful blue eye denoted no sympathy with the scene ; her countenance betrayed no wonder at the tricks of the pantomime ; nor

could all the contortions of the clown produce more than a quiet smile upon her well-formed lips. And yet Amelia had not witnessed the tragedy without feeling ; nor did she now contemplate the wonders of the pantomime without pleasure ; but she had been schooled into a repression of all its appearances. She had been taught that the expressions of wonder or any show of sensibility was unpolite and unlady-like. And the outward ease which she was thus compelled to wear, was gradually indurating the heart beneath it. It was already acting as a frost upon the stream of her youthful disposition, and nipping the generosity of her nature in the bud.

At length the curtain dropped, and shut the magic scene from the still-straining eyes of Agnes. And which of us does not remember the regret with which we in childhood have seen the dark-green curtain descending, and covering the splendours of the temple of pantomime, its tinsel waters, and its glittering canvas pillars? Who does not recollect the melancholy with which we have seen the au-

dience hurry out of the theatre, and the candle-snuffer put out the lights and hang the aprons over the boxes ; and with which we turn from the bright imagination of the poet and the painter to the dull realities of our lives ? How little do we then imagine that in a few, a very few years, we shall wait impatiently for that which then gave us so much pain ; and that we shall have the greatest difficulty in keeping our eyes open to witness objects from which we then derived so much delight, that we imagine we wish them to endure for ever !

Not all the influence of her mother, nor the formal reproofs of her father and aunt, could repress the prattle of Agnes as the carriage whirled them home. Question followed question, and wonder succeeded wonder, as she recapitulated all she had seen : and Amelia was buried in sleep long before Agnes had finished her relation of all the wonders she had witnessed to her maid.

Mrs. Fleming had contemplated the different characters of her children, as they were exhibited that evening, with equal regret. She

mourned over the schooled mannerism of the one, as much as she dreaded the acute sensibilities of the other. She would have warmed, had she possessed the power, the heart and feelings of Amelia with a little of the Protestant fire which burnt too strongly in the spirit of Agnes—a spirit alas, too like her own, and which, as she recalled all the early scenes of her own existence, made her tremble for the happiness of her daughter. She sighed—

—to think how soon that brow
In grief might lose its every ray,
And that light heart, so joyous now,
Almost forgot it once was gay.

As these scenes and circumstances recurred to her imagination and remembrance, she mentally exclaimed—“Ought I not rather to school her into the insensibility of her sister, than encourage feelings which may blossom only to be blighted? Is it not better for her to be insensible to the more exquisite pleasures of our nature, than run the hazard of their being turned to bitterness, as mine have been?”

Yet with all the experience of her own blighted hopes, with all the remembrance of the miseries entailed on her by her own acute sense of feeling, she could not resolve to wish the heart of Agnes to be cold or inanimate.

But the sensibility of her nature was now daily developing to the anxious observation of an affectionate and trembling mother; who, for the sake of her child, began to dread that death, which she had long anticipated from her increasing feebleness, but which had no terrors for her in its approach.

She now, however, saw the necessity of a kind directing hand; and too plainly perceived that the severity of ceremony which characterised Mr. Fleming, was not adapted to the education and guidance of such a heart and mind as those of Agnes were, in their germs, and promised to be in their maturity.

She determined, therefore, to struggle with the incipient consumption which had already tinted her cheek with that bright and beautiful spot, which has too often deceived both its victims and their friends. Alas! the very strug-

gle for life under such a disease only tends^t to its speedier exhaustion. But for her young and innocent child she could resolve to live, although life had long lost all its charms for her; to subdue the excess of feeling, which had already begun to display itself, without banishing it entirely; to regulate her sensibilities, without annihilating them; to place a sound judgment, and a pure sense of religion, as sentinels over an exuberant fancy, and a wild imagination, was the plan of education which occupied the mind of this tender mother, as she reclined upon her sleepless pillow; and for which of us has not the pillow of a parent been sleepless through many a long night?—for which of us has it not been bathed with tears of agonising anxiety as to the future welfare of a beloved child?

As her love mingled with her fears for Agnes, a mother's voice breathed a fervent prayer to the great Director of all hearts for the happiness of her child.

Does not such an humble prayer ascend more gratefully, direct from the heart, and dictated by the feelings, to the throne of the Almighty,

than the ritual which form prescribes, though clothed with all the magnificence of language, and chanted amidst the imposing solemnities of sacerdotal ceremony,

Where pealing organs swell the note of praise.

CHAPTER II.

RETROSPECTION.

And now the weary traveller attains
Some towering height—at last
He rests in his career, and backward looks
O'er forests dark and lengthy plains,
At rushing torrents, babbling brooks,
Beauties and barrenness, that alike
Upon his mind with melancholy strike,
Because they are past.

ANON.

THE early history of Mrs. Fleming was that of many young women whose fashion is superior to their fortune, and whose parents rather consider the establishment than the happiness of their child. Born with all the genuine feelings of her sex, with a heart capable of loving

warmly, and with ideas that marriage should be the result only of affection, she yielded up her young heart to its first impulses in favour of a person a few years older than herself, whose talents for conversation and powers of entertainment had made him a frequent and a welcome guest at her father's table.

To procure establishments for a numerous family, was the great and only ambition of her mother, Lady Mary Dornton.

It was this lady's policy, therefore, to render her dinner-table and drawing-room as attractive, as gaiety, talent, and entertainment, could make them; and she felt proud in the contemplation of her success, as three married daughters sometimes graced the paternal board, while the scions of many of her contemporary rival matrons yet moved on in single blessedness.

She had still, however, a daughter to dispose of; and the Honourable Mr. Dornton's declining health made her dread a circumstance which, by leaving her only in possession of a widow's jointure, would prevent the continuance of her system, and deprive them of the advantages and

facilities which crowded drawing-rooms and quadrilles and duets afford to young ladies and manœuvring mammas.

Lady Mary had married a younger brother, and was not like some of her contemporaries, whose fortunes enabled them to render their houses and tables attractive by the sumptuousness of their feasts, and the splendour of her entertainments; she therefore had recourse to all the talent of the day, as an attraction to counterbalance the advantage which superior fortunes gave so many of her competitors in the field of matrimonial speculation.

To have written a poem or a play, or to be celebrated for either instrumental or vocal performances, or, in short, to be celebrated for any thing, was a sure passport to the parties of Lady Mary Dornton.

She had sufficient taste and discrimination herself to feel the superiority of intellectual over merely sensual gratification: she felt that the wit which presided as the tutelar deity of her own dinners, rendered them superior in attraction to the wines which sparkled in such expensive

variety at those of others ; and she herself paid a tribute to this superiority by her own enjoyment of the “feast of reason and the flow of soul” which she provided for others. But, alas ! she forgot that these very means were perpetual impediments in the way of her own success, by showing the superiority of talent over rank and fortune. She forgot that the liveliness of the pennyless wit only served to make the dulness of the man of ten thousand a year more conspicuous ; not that dulness and ten thousand a year are synonymous ; for there really are some people with twice this income who are very pleasant fellows and very loveable persons in spite of it.

Unfortunately for Lady Mary’s system, when the wit and observation of a man are sharpened by a collision with the world, in all the various states in which it is shown at sessions, and assizes, and in the King’s Bench and Common Pleas, and the numberless other scenes in which active talent is employed, together with the perpetual exercise of ingenuity and eloquence, —it generally makes the younger brother who is

brought up to the bar, a pleasanter fellow and a more agreeable lover than the elder one who is brought up to the estate.

But younger brothers were not Lady Mary's objects now, though she had not disdained one in her youth. They were not likely to afford establishments of sufficient consequence to provide her a periodical residence when the dreaded event we have alluded to should occur ; and it was her plan that her daughters' houses should be such as would enable them to return in kind, in her old age and widowhood, that which she had done for them in their youth : in short, in all their establishments, she had an eye to her own future comforts.

Unfortunately, however, her scheme, though it eventually succeeded, kept the hearts of her daughters in a perpetual state of rebellion against their interests. They could not associate with talent without feeling its influence ; they could not hear soft and sweet music from the voice of one man, resplendent repartee from the lips of another, and feel a deep interest in the voyages, adventures, and " hair-breadth

'scapes" of a third, and turn round and bestow their admiration and affection upon one who was perhaps looking only with envy upon these qualifications without possessing any of them, and whose only claim to admiration was a title or an estate unencumbered by any thing but his own dulness and stupidity.

Yet this was precisely what Lady Mary wished and expected her daughters to do; and consequently there was not one of them married to the man whom her own heart would have preferred, had it been left free and unbiassed in its choice.

It has often struck us that the heads of a family are not justified in the admission of any person into the intimate society of their children, to whom, should an attachment occur, there would be any decided objection. They should recollect that young hearts do not discriminate like old heads, and should be careful how they introduce talent, cheerfulness, and pleasantry, united with youth and perhaps personal attraction, while their possessors are persons to whom they would object as husbands for their daugh-

ters. Yet of this imprudence how many parents are guilty! They themselves are pleased merely with the talent which excites in them only admiration; and they seem to forget that in younger minds and hearts this sensation is too likely to be accompanied by softer feelings, which may give a colour to future existence. -

Happily for all but Mrs. Fleming, they were possessed of hearts which soon gratefully acknowledged the prudence of their mother, and which soon forgot their early predilections in favour of sentiment, in the contemplation and enjoyment of equipage and splendour.

Unluckily for Agnes, the subject of our present episode and the mother of our heroines, her heart was more deeply susceptible of its first impressions. She could not love and forget; her feelings once aroused, she could not find a Lethean draught either in pleasure or in splendour to bury the remembrance of them in oblivion. Oh what a happy art is forgetfulness! from how many pangs does it save us! how many a heart has it prevented from breaking! and

to how many minds has it restored peace and tranquillity!

Among those who were frequent and welcome guests at the table and in the drawing-room of Lady Mary Dornton, was Augustus Clifton. He had just quitted college, and had commenced his literary career by a poem, which had given notoriety to his name, and which of course became a visiting ticket to parties where talent was the passport for admittance.

But Clifton was not a hackneyed poet. His production was that of impulse rather than of education. He had pourtrayed the passions, not as he had read of them, but as he felt them growing up in his own heart. He was a poet by nature, and all nature appeared to his young and unsullied imagination but as a beautiful poem;—he considered all his undefined longings, all his incipient passions, only as so many legitimate passports to enjoyment. He had indeed the mind of a true poet—he looked at every thing abstractedly—he loved nature—he loved the world, and called it a beautiful world, because all things seemed

to conspire to his wishes. He loved fame too, and wished to live in futurity—he could not bear that with his life his name should pass away—he wished that it might be enrolled among the master spirits of poetry in the Abbey—he wished posterity to read it recorded with those from whose works he quoted so frequently and so aptly—he could not bear that

He should be left, forgotten in the dust,
When fate, relenting, lets the flower revive.

One vigorous effort of a young mind had gained him a celebrity which he was inexperienced enough to suppose would stand him in the stead of rank and fortune; he imagined the caresses and the invitations he received on all hands to be the permanent result of respect for his talents, instead of the evanescent feeling which would last only so long as he could afford entertainment. He believed the professions of assistance which he received to be sincere, and imagined that he saw a hand ready to help him up every step of the ladder of fame, and that

fortune waited to welcome him at the top of it.

He was yet to learn that selfish vanity was the groundwork of all the kindness he received, and that the moment his presence ceased to gratify this passion in his admirers, they would cease to remember that he existed.

He little thought that his patrons of the moment would treat him as they did their champagne, enjoy its sparkling qualities, and dash aside the bottle which contained them the moment they ceased to exhilarate.

Unfortunately for poor Mrs. Fleming, at the moment of Clifton's first introduction, her mother's mind was so intensely occupied with her manœuvres to make her third daughter the lady of a young baronet who had succeeded to an estate of seven thousand a year, that she was permitted unmolested to form her own little coteries in the drawing-room, to secure the arm and the companionship of the one she liked best to the dinner-table, and was allowed sufficient leisure to see and appreciate the talent which

was considered by her mother only as an appendage to her party.

There was an artless buoyancy in the conversation of Augustus that rendered it quite unlike that of the hackneyed diner-out and that of the professed wits, who appeared made up for the occasion; and Agnes thought she perceived under all his brilliancy, a goodness of heart and a generosity of nature which she had herself sense and heart enough to appreciate far beyond the qualities which merely afforded entertainment. There was likewise that congeniality of disposition and sentiment so often existing between young, lively, and virtuous minds at their first entrance into the world, which drew them together. She found in his conversation all her own feelings expressed in much better and stronger language than that in which she could dress them up. Her heart silently acquiesced in the propriety of all he said, until imperceptibly he became the lawgiver to her feelings—the glass in which she moulded every action of her life; and she found herself

perpetually thinking what he would say of this, and what he would think of that.

On his part, he was charmed with her naïveté, and his heart was flattered by her evident though silent admiration. In time, he strove only to shine in her eyes; and at any sally of his wit, he turned to her smile as the principal meed of approbation. In short, what with music and poetry, and congeniality of sentiment, they went on and on, till they found themselves passionately in love with each other; and unfortunately not with that evanescent passion, the result of a few quadrilles and fine speeches, but with a love arising from a knowledge of the qualities of each other's hearts.

Young and ingenuous, they were not long in coming to an explanation, or at least to an understanding of each other's sentiments; for feelings like theirs required no set forms of speech to make them known. Their eyes, the sound of each other's voices, their parting and meeting tremors, the searching looks of the one and the retiring glances of the other, soon disclosed more

than whole hours of formal declaration could have done.

At length, however, the moment of declaration came; the tongue gave utterance to those feelings which the eyes had already expressed; mutual vows, such vows as pass woman's lips but once, and springing warm from the heart, were given and received, and they felt rich in all the feelings of a first and young love; and who is there that under this influence does not overlook every obstacle to its gratification? What difficulties does it not hide from the inexperienced or blinded eyes of the lovers! what path does it not smooth! what prospect does it not brighten!

It was thus with Augustus and Agnes. He felt that within him which might procure fortune, though he was not possessed of it; and she fondly thought that her parents would overlook this deficiency, as she was the only person who would have to suffer the privations arising from its absence.

Filled with these ideas, they gave themselves

up to the indulgence of their mutual love, nor woke from their pleasing dream until the third sister was married ; and Lady Mary Dorntòn informed Agnes that proposals had been made in due form for her hand by Mr. Fleming, the only son of the rich Russian merchant whose wealth enabled him to outvie in splendour the proudest and the oldest aristocracy of the country.

Poor Agnes ! it was some time before she could even bring to memory the person of this man, who now declared himself a candidate for her hand. He had sat unnoticed amidst the brilliant sallies of wit which graced her mother's table ; and it was a long time before Lady Mary could bring to her recollection a very formal gentleman, who had twice asked her to dance a quadrille, and had three or four times taken wine with her at dinner.

When at length she did recollect a precise young gentleman, dressed to the very nicety of propriety, full of set speeches upon points of etiquette and appearance in the world, and was told by her mother that she must prepare to receive this gentleman as her husband in a tone

that seemed so peremptory, as to take no denial and admit of no argument,—poor Agnes was thunder-struck. Her first impulse was to tell the true state of her feelings—but the words seemed glued to her lips ; all she could murmur in her mother's ear was, “ No—no—no,” and she burst into tears. Lady Mary soothed her, praised her own and her father's anxiety for the happiness and welfare of their children, and spoke so much of parental tenderness, that Agnes began to think her heart rebellious and ungrateful to have a wish contrary to those of such kind parents.

CHAPTER III.

A STRUGGLE.

Why is it, Fortune, that we seldom see
Thy golden links with Love's fair roses twin'd?
Why is it, Love, thou ever seem'st to flee
Those golden gifts, which, with thy power combin'd,
Might make a bliss instead of curse of thee?
Is it because Love ever has been taught
His vows by Fortune are not to be bought?
Or is it only that ye both are blind?

OLD ALLEGORY.

WE will pass over the explanation, and terror, and grief of the young lovers; the sudden determination to fly from parents, friends, and the world, and give up all for love; and the struggle with which Agnes brought herself again

into the line of her duty. Their hearts, their feelings were in an uproar. At one time they determined to throw themselves at the feet of her parents, tell the devotedness of their love, and appeal to their mercy. At this period Mr. Dornton died.

The real grief of Agnes for the death of her father and the ceremonials of widowhood on the part of her mother, for a time suspended all other considerations; Augustus's sympathy however in her loss only fixed the heart of poor Agnes more firmly upon him. She had one less to love in the world; and the love which was thus deprived of its object, seemed to render that which she felt for Augustus the stronger.

It was during this period of mourning that the absence of company, and the comparative solitude in which they lived, gave Lady Mary the opportunity of discovering the true state of her daughter's affections, and her repugnance to the marriage with Mr. Fleming was accounted for. This marriage was, however, more than ever desirable since the death of her husband,

and the before-mentioned jointure had become her only reliance, and she determined to leave no scheme untried to accomplish it. The expensive life she had led, had totally precluded the possibility of any provision being made for Agnes ; she therefore worked upon her generous feelings, by the argument of a portionless wife being a burden upon the talents of Augustus, and being likely to keep him in a state of dependence and poverty all his life. Poor Agnes felt that these would be nothing were they shared with him she loved ; but yet her generous soul recoiled from the idea of being a clog upon the talents she admired ; and she looked forward with something like dismay to the possibility of self-reproach, should any period arrive in whichs he might be an impediment to the fortune or exertions of Augustus.

On the other hand, Lady Mary sent for Clifton, and represented to him the injustice of his preventing the establishment of Agnes, while there was no probability of his having one to offer her—professed that had Agnes been possessed of a fortune sufficient for them both,

that their union would have made her happy—nay, went so far as to say, that had her jointure not been so very inconsiderable, or had it been sufficient for them all to have lived upon it, she would have sanctioned their union, and given them a home, until his talents and exertions could win their way to the success they deserved; but her much-admired Mr. Clifton must feel, she said, that it was impossible for her to consign her daughter to poverty; and she was sure that his own affection for Agnes would prevent his being a party to such a sacrifice. She represented the luxury in which she had been accustomed to live; and contrasted it with the probable state to which her marriage with Augustus would reduce her, and pourtrayed her sinking silently and uncomplainingly under the contemptuous pity of her former companions.

Clifton felt the full force of all she said, and quitted her broken-hearted.

Agnes was thus separated from her lover, and left to all the schemes and manœuvres of Lady Mary; but nothing could work upon her to ac-

cept Mr. Fleming. She could feel it to be imperative upon her duty, not to act in violation of her mother's wishes, and upon her love, not to involve its object in the possibility of poverty and distress; but no consideration could induce her to accompany any one man to the altar, while she felt her heart exclusively devoted to another.

Such an act appeared to her eyes but in the light of legal prostitution; she could not imagine that a mere ceremony of the lips was sufficient to sanctify a union in the sight of God, without the sacred words were accompanied by the feelings of the heart. She felt herself in her affections as the bride of Augustus, and the idea of any other man as a husband was revolting to her mind. She could give up her lover from a sense of duty, but she could not consent to receive another.

Lady Mary, however, was determined to carry her point: she knew the female heart, and she knew the vulnerable points of that of Agnes in particular. She knew it not to be attackable on the side of vanity; that equi-

page and establishment had no weight with her in comparison with feeling and affection; and that to be successful, she must approach her through some of those generous impulses by which she was so often guided.

She was aware of her daughter's devoted love to herself; and this was the stepping-stone to the accomplishment of her project.

She began about this time really to feel the insufficiency of her jointure, and she made this insufficiency appear much greater than it really was. She invented distresses, which she appeared to try to conceal from the observation of Agnes, quite assured at the same time, that she knew and felt them acutely.

The other daughters in the midst of their splendid establishments forgot to realise their mother's project in obtaining them, and neglected her.—This she really felt herself; and she contrived to make Agnes feel it more. She then became melancholy—was discovered once or twice in tears; consulted Agnes on sinking at once from all rank in society; and when she saw that she had worked sufficiently on her filial feelings,

she mentioned the generous proposals of Fleming—his unbounded fortune—the power it might have given Agnes of relieving an affectionate parent, and compensating to her for the ingratitude of her other children.

But it is disgusting to dwell on all the cold-blooded selfish policy, which actuates a mother determined on the sacrifice of a daughter. It is revolting to human nature, to think upon the many hearts immolated upon the shrine which the selfishness of relations creates; and upon the thousand schemes which are successful only in too many instances to subject their victims to temptations, which lead them into errors, to which the opposition of parental authority, upon such a point, would have been venial.

Suffice it to say, that the distress of her mother, and her filial affection, at length so wrought upon her heart, that she first consented to listen to her mother's proposals on the part of Mr. Fleming, and at length to listen to Mr. Fleming himself.

She persuaded herself, that Clifton being lost, there was no other hope of happiness

for her ; and with her usual romantic tendency, determined to sacrifice herself for her mother ; quieting her conscience on the subject of her love for another, by the intention of making an exemplary wife. Perhaps, too, unknown to herself, she was influenced by the perfect silence of Augustus—a silence that was tacitly insinuated to have arisen from the certainty that he had obtained of her having no fortune.

This idea she rejected, however, indignantly ; but still the silence—the apparent and total abandonment she had experienced, had its effect upon feminine pride—(and what woman is without it?)—and helped her mother's schemes.

Poor Augustus, always in extremes—influenced by the arguments of Lady Mary, generously and at once sacrificed his feelings to what he considered the interests of Agnes ; and having once come to this determination, he did it completely. But could Agnes have beheld him in his solitary chambers, gazing on every remembrance he possessed of their short and unhappy loves ; could she have known of his sleepless nights—and have beheld his pale wan

cheek growing hourly paler and thinner, not even the love she bore her mother—not even her high sense of duty would have made her relinquish him.

Well—Mr. Fleming was at length admitted ; brought and formally introduced, in his character as an approved lover, by Lady Mary, and left alone with Agnes to tell his own tale.

As she coldly listened to his formal address, how did her poor heart sicken at the contrast between the set terms, the studied sentences, the etiquette of his declaration, and the fire and feeling of Clifton, when an accidental circumstance drew from his bursting heart the full and free confession of a first and genuine love.

But this thought was dangerous, and she did not indulge it. She reflected on her mother's reduced means—she anticipated something like the return of pleasure in adding to her comforts, and she accepted Mr. Fleming.

From this moment, all was bustle and importance on the part of Lady Mary. Paragraphs in the public papers hinted at the approaching union—friends poured in with congratulations—

her sisters, relieved from the dread of her being a poor unportioned dependent ; all contributed to give eclat to, and to hasten the accomplishment of their mother's wishes. Agnes had scarcely any time left for thought ; and she herself felt its indulgence to be too dangerous to encourage it.

Augustus read in the solitude of his chambers paragraph after paragraph, with initials the same as those which were inscribed on a pale gold ring, the only gift of his adored Agnes. As the nuptials approached, the papers spoke out more plainly ; and at length, the approaching union of " the rich Mr. Henry Fleming with the youngest daughter of the fashionable Lady Mary Dornton," was openly announced. His eye was fascinated to the paragraph. It was in vain he tried, with a temporary assumption of coolness and a kind of hysteric laugh, to read it to the end. Something about Rundell and Bridge, and diamonds, and Brussels lace, and white satin, danced before his eyes. But he comprehended it not ; or rather, his comprehension was so acute as to render him for a moment

insensible to the extent of the agonizing information it contained. He threw down the paper—he walked to the window—he gazed into the Temple-gardens, and on to the Thames, busy with the hum of men—but he saw nothing. He strode back to his chair—he tried to resume his studies—he fancied that he could bear the shock with a fortitude worthy of a man of strong mind, and he burst into tears. The flood-gates of his grief were open; the full tide of agony rolled in burning drops down his cheeks: it was in vain that he bit his lip till the red stream mingled with his tears—'twas in vain that by a muscular compression of his forehead and hands, he attempted to obtain that iron rigidity of nerves necessary to restrain the ebullition of his feelings. The result of his efforts only ended in convulsed hysterical sobs, in sighs that were almost screams, and in ejaculations of indifference; the truth of which every tear and every groan denied. It was the final ruin of the first hopes which he had formed in life; the confirmation of the blight of his first youthful feelings and affections. And who is there

that has not experienced the same agony that at this moment overpowered the manliness of Augustus Clifton ?

He had vainly thought that his mind was made up to the event which he felt must one day or other be accomplished ; he imagined that he had wrought his heart into that state of insensibility, that would enable him to contemplate with stoicism the catastrophe of his first love.

Poor youth !—at three-and-twenty he attempted a task which nothing but constant collision with a cold-blooded world can enable any warm heart to accomplish.

Ashamed of the ebullition of feeling, he rushed from his solitary chambers, in the hope of forgetting his agony in a crowd. “ At any rate,” he said, “ I shall there have pride to aid me in the repression of these womanish tears.” He walked down to the courts with his heart burdened and sick ; he forced himself into the bustle of the world. Here he found all busy :—every look important ; every eye animated. Old barristers gliding about, loaded with papers which they seldom read. Here a young lawyer,

delighted with his first brief, which he had learned by heart ; and there an antiquated judge, jesting with his “ learned brothers,” while the fortunes of the suitors were depending on the charge issuing from his lips.

And there he sat among all his brother aspirants for wealth and fame, without the possibility of withdrawing his mind from the circumstance that rivetted it with a basiliskian tenacity.

“ How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable,” did all this bustle before him appear to his eyes ! How did his heart sicken at the struggles of wigs and gowns for pre-eminence ! and yet but a few short months before this period, he had entered this arena of forensic eloquence and of legal quibble—this bridge of sighs and tears for clients, and of fees and fun to lawyers—with all the high and animated hopes of youth. He thought his first brief but the stepping-stone to that fortune which was to be shared with Agnes ; and the idea of her love, the hope of her hand, smoothed the passage from the bar to the bench. He already imagined a silk gown upon his shoulders, and a sergeant’s wig upon his head ;

and considered these appendages as the main-object of his ambition. How different were his feelings now ! the motive of action lost—his occupation gone—he sat the victim of that silent agony of the heart, which made him wonder at the importance which all around him seemed to give to trifles.—For trifles did all the business of this world now appear to the eyes of Augustus.

At this moment an attorney put into his hands a brief. Augustus stared at him with an astonishment that quite surprised the poor attorney. Recalled, however, to recollection by the circumstance, he attempted to rally the powers of his mind to the task before him. At this moment he observed a celebrated barrister just sitting down, after an able and animated speech—a reply, in which he had called up all the precedents which the Term Reports afforded, as evidences of his case ; and showed the profundity of his knowledge, by summoning to his assistance every particle of our complex laws that was applicable to his argument—though he knew that the heart of this very barrister was bursting under the loss of a

beloved wife, lying, at that very instant, an unburied corpse at that home of which she had been the beneficent and presiding spirit. The animation of his subject passed away as the advocate sat down among the approving murmurs of the court, and his countenance became immediately clouded by the domestic grief which weighed upon his heart. This was a powerful lesson to the young Augustus, that private feeling must give way to public duty; and that the common business of life must go on in spite of the private heart-aches which may oppress the individuals concerned in their progress.

Agnes, on her part, was not less unhappy; but feminine delicacy prevented its appearance anywhere but in the silence of her chamber; there she still indulged those recollections which a few weeks would now render criminal. She still looked on every token of her first lover's affection, as they lay humbly by the side of Mr. Fleming's more splendid, but far less cherished, gifts, on her toilet-table.

She had been gradually working up her mind to the necessity of sacrificing these tokens; but

she still preserved them to the last possible moment, that she could retain and gaze upon them without a crime. She would not run the risk of communication, or of hurting the feelings of Augustus by returning them; nor would she hazard their ever being worn by any but herself. They were consecrated to the first and only love she had ever experienced; and she consigned them to destruction along with the passion of which they had been the tokens. At length, on the evening preceding the morning fixed for her marriage, she worked up her mind to the dreaded task—she desired her maid to replenish the fire in her dressing-room, and retire for the night.

For some time she moved restlessly about her room, without being able to assume sufficient resolution. She determined to curb this restlessness, and sat down doggedly to the fire. Her eye fixed upon the rising flames, with scarcely less feeling than that which the victim of some horrid sacrifice might be supposed to contemplate the fire upon the altar on which she was to be immolated. From the fire, her eye wan-

dered round the apartment ; resting first on the humble ornaments, and a pile of sonnets, sent to her by Augustus ; then on the more splendid decorations which glittered proudly in the jewel-case which had been forwarded that evening from Rundell's. The former had been slipped on to her finger, or clasped round her neck or arm by the hands of Augustus ; each rendered dearer by a few hurried lines of poetry : the latter had arrived, accompanied by a perfumed note of compliment and ceremony. From these she withdrew her eyes, and they fell upon a superb dress of white satin, trimmed with lace from the looms of Mecklin and Brussels, and ornamented round the throat with swansdown that might rival the drifted snow in whiteness. From the cheval glass hung, carelessly tied round one of its supporters, a white satin Spanish hat, looped up in front with a knot of diamonds that sparkled brilliantly in the fire-light. She shrunk with a cold shudder from the contemplation of these dresses, when she recollected the use for which they were designed : they brought the sacrifice she was going to make

more palpably to her imagination, and rendered the immediate destruction she contemplated more necessary than ever.

She seized upon the few ornaments she had received from Clifton, kissed them again and again—gazed upon them—and one by one committed them to the fire, which was now intense enough to accomplish their destruction easily. She had more difficulty in parting from the letters and poems. Each was an illustration of the heart of the writer, and of the passion by which he was inspired. Every line brought the moment of its composition fresh to her recollection, with all the vivid feelings which accompanied it.

The dearer, however, she found them to be, the greater she felt the necessity for their destruction. Wet with her tears, she threw them one after another into the flames; and they soon dropped in sparkling and blackened fragments on the hearth, fit illustrations of her darkened prospects and destroyed hopes.

As she watched the destruction of the first sonnet he had ever addressed to her, and which

she had reserved till the last, a burst of grief issued in sighs and groans from her overwhelmed heart. She started—was it imagination, or did she really hear her sigh re-echoed in the direction of the window? She listened with breathless attention—a rustling, stronger than that of the night-breeze, seemed, for a moment, to agitate the trees which overhung her casement—a moan, louder than that of the whistling of the wind, seemed to meet her ear; and all was again silent.

Could it be possible? thought she—could it be!—no, no! the height of her window from the ground—the difficulty of access to the gardens behind the houses she inhabited—all forbade the supposition. She chid herself for having one moment indulged it; and wept away the night in fruitless regrets of the past and gloomy anticipations for the future, and in vain attempts to reduce her feelings to that state of tranquillity which the ceremony of the coming day required.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BRIDE.

Mark but the frame and temper of their minds,
How very much they differ. E'en this day,
That fills him with such ecstasy and transport,
To her brings nothing that should make her bless it,
Or think it better than the day before,
Or any other in the course of time.

THE day appointed for the nuptials came. It was a clear bright morning in early spring; the stunted plants in the square which Agnes inhabited, had already put forth their half-grown buds in spite of the smoky atmosphere of the metropolis; the sun shone in at the windows of her dressing-room with a cheerfulness that

seemed a mockery to the feelings within. The busy early world of London was on the wing, and Agnes's maid was decorating her for her wedding.

Carriage after carriage arrived, and set down the invited guests at Lady Mary Dornton's; all was hurry and bustle and congratulation; and the formal Mr. Fleming was gratified by the numerous coronets appertaining to various branches of his bride's family, which were assembled to grace the approaching ceremony.

In this wedding party there were no sly jests upon the occasion of the meeting, no significant looks and distant inuendoes; all was decorum and ceremony—all punctilio and politeness. Lady Mary, divested of her widow's weeds, and dressed in a garment corresponding with that of her daughter, moved among the assembled circle, the envy of many an unsuccessful mother who had been angling for the same prize.

Mr. Fleming, with stiff ceremony and ill-concealed pride, received the congratulations which were poured into his ear, rendered more or less palatable by the rank of those who paid them.

His ambition had been to ally himself with nobility; and the crowd of titled cousins of his intended wife from the first to the sixteenth degree, for Lady Mary had assembled them all, convinced him that his wealth had purchased noble connexions by wholesale; and his vanity was delighted to think that a little hour would see him the cousin by marriage to at least one-sixth of the coroneted heads of the kingdom.

It was with this view that he had been so pertinacious in his pursuit of Agnes: both by her father's and mother's side nobly allied, he had discovered, by the help of the peerage, that although they were the younger and the poorer branches of their respective families, the ramifications of their family connexions were so numerous, as to make them cousins of all the Howards, and the Cavendishes, and the Trent-hams, and of twenty other noble stocks, (to adopt an auctioneer's style,) too numerous to mention.

He determined therefore in his own mind, to surmount his former crest of a bear couchant, with the lion rampant, rising out of the

ducal coronet that belonged to a distant branch of his wife's family, and to substitute the rich liveries with aiguillettes, of the Dorntons, for the plain, sober, brown, city decoration of his own servants.

All these determinations took place in the mind of Mr. Fleming while waiting for his bride; nor did her appearance, all beautiful as she was, in the last hour of her maidenhood, drive these ideas from his imagination.

His was a mind and heart untouched by the sacred fire of feeling; the ethereal spark of existence seemed omitted in his composition; all was dull dense matter: the whole extent of his perceptions reached not beyond the ceremony and etiquette of that society to which he had gained admission only by his enormous wealth. The greatest misery to himself, and the greatest crime in others, was to offend against that *bienséance* in the study of which he had forgotten whether he had ever possessed a heart.

The language of passion was as far removed from his powers as its feelings; he had no con-

ception of marriage beyond its ceremony and the connexion he was to acquire by it. The kind of woman by whom these wishes were to be accomplished was nearly indifferent to him, and it was by mere accident that he found the opportunity of accomplishing them, through the medium of one so lovely and so amiable as Agnes.

Such was the bridegroom destined to lead to the altar a young and ardent woman, who had pictured her future husband as a hero, and a man of sentiment and of talent ; such the man to become entitled to all those warm and generous feelings which had been yielded with the ardour of a first love, to a man who promised to realise all her youthful anticipations ; such was the frigid successor to the fiery and impetuous Augustus Clifton.

Agnes entered the drawing-room, surrounded by her mother and married sisters, and supported by her bridesmaids, whose laughing countenances, sparkling eyes, and rosy dimples, formed strong contrasts to the pallid and sunken cheek and dim eye of the bride, which appeared

tearless from exhaustion, rather than from the absence of sorrow. A slight tremor ran through her frame as she was met by Mr. Fleming with one of his best bows—and the words “poor thing,” — “embarrassment,” — “agitation,” — “novelty of her situation,” &c. were buzzed round the busy circle by her mother, to account for her agitated appearance.

The signal was now given for departure, and all the horses' heads were turned in the direction of St. James's; the bridegroom's carriage being the first, that he might be in readiness to receive his bride at the altar.

At the first sight of the church the shuddering of Agnes returned; and she could not have experienced a more revolting feeling of terror and disgust at crossing the threshold, had the celebrated words of Dante

Voi che entrate lasciate ogni speranza

been actually written over the church-door.

In point of fact, it was to prove the tomb of her early hopes: what, when she left it, was to become of all her young and ardent feeling?—

which of all her bright anticipations would ever be realised? In a few short moments the very thought of them was to become a crime.

Supported by her mother, she tottered up the aisle, and, surrounded by the splendid and fashionable circle, stood in front of the clergyman, and in the face of that altar where she was to vow love, honour, and obedience to one, to whom, alas, she could only insure the latter. That, she reflected, was in her power. She cast one glance on her mother; thought upon the reasons of her devoted sacrifice; bowed her head to the clergyman, as the lovely flower bows before the storm it cannot resist, and the ceremony commenced.

Mr. Fleming made his responses in a loud and sonorous voice, precisely in the same manner as he would have done at the Liturgy in the Morning Prayer. The officiating priest dropped his voice into a more piano tone as he put the necessary questions to the bride. Her responses, if she made them, were inarticulate and inaudible; but she breathed hardly, and he

was too well-bred not to imagine them made, as things of course; and proceeded.

An icebolt seemed to shoot through her heart as the ring which sealed her fate was placed on her finger; and, as she sunk on her knees to hear the blessing and prayer which concludes the ceremony, she almost wished the pavement would open, and sink her into the charnel-house beneath.

The clergyman closed the book. Every head was bowed down, apparently in a secret aspiration to heaven—when the dead silence of the church was broken by one convulsive sob that burst from a distant part of the building, and sounded like the last effort of a breaking heart.

The bride started to her feet, and sunk senseless into her mother's arms; they two alone, of all the assembly, knew from whose bosom the appalling groan had been extorted.

Every eye was turned in the direction from which the cry had proceeded, but there was no one there; the galleries appeared empty, and many were the silly expressions of surprise and fear uttered by the young misses, and exclama-

tions of "What can it mean?" "Who can it be?" that came from the lips of the elder ladies of the party. Eau de Cologne and otto of roses were in great request.

The bridegroom only exclaimed, that it was very unceremonious and improper; and adding, that the *canaille* ought to be excluded from the churches appropriated to people of fashion, followed his bride into the vestry, to see if she was recovered from her fainting fit, and to perform the other ceremonials of the occasion.

"Agnes was recovered, but looked paler than before. Her husband now led her out of the church; and as she passed along, her eye was observed to wander in every direction, and to peruse every countenance that gazed at her, with an intensity which seemed to imply an expectation which she dreaded, yet wished to realise. As she entered the carriage, also, she gazed wildly among the crowd that surrounded the church-doors, nor withdrew her eager glance until the whirling vehicle left the admiring populace at a distance.

White favours were now distributed among

the servants. Coarse jests passed from footman to footman. The different carriages, after a sumptuous breakfast, rolled through the streets of London, all proclaiming the ceremony of the morning; and the papers the next day announced that the happy pair had quitted town to spend the honey-moon at "Fleming-hall," which had recently been newly and splendidly furnished preparatory to the nuptials of the wealthy proprietor.

A few days afterwards, the same paper gave an account of the ringing of bells, and the rejoicing among the tenantry; and the barrels of ale distributed, and the oxen which were roasted in the village where Mr. Fleming's property was situated; and the poor misled world set down the weeping, trembling, heart-broken, and disappointed Agnes, as a happy, joyous, and enviable bride.

Years passed on, and yet her heart-sickness remained. She could not assimilate her mind with all the little forms and ceremonies which made up the serious business of Mr. Fleming's life, and which pervaded every thing he did.

All the warm charities of her heart, in which her present fortune allowed her to indulge, were prevented from giving her the comfort she might otherwise have derived from the exercise of them, by her not being permitted to dispense them in any other way than through the ceremonious means of an almoner.

It was contrary to his received ideas of propriety, that Mrs. Fleming should come in contact with the peasantry on his estate, whom he never condescended to see, except at Christmas, or on some family occasion, when he would imitate older territorial proprietors, by regaling them in his hall or in his park.

Her mother lived but a very short time to enjoy the fruit of the sacrifice, which was thus rendered useless ; yet Agnes still made an exemplary wife, though the pallid cheek and attenuated form bespoke the deep inroad which unrequited feeling was gradually making upon her constitution.

Perhaps there is nothing more wearing to the mind than that attention to minutiae which meets one at every turning ; nothing so harassing to the feelings of a warm and generous heart,

teeming with all the best impulses of human nature, as to be trammelled with perpetual ceremony, and to be compelled to watch one's looks and words with a lynx-eyed attention, lest something escape that may not be strictly correct according to the established code of punctilious politeness.

Again, to have a confiding, affectionate disposition ; to feel in one's heart the *soif d'aimer*, and to find the only person who has a legal title to these affections, so cold as to be incapable of exciting them, and unable to appreciate them, is sufficient to wear away the strongest heart, and in time to undermine the strongest constitution.

The birth of her children opened a source of delight to her ; but this was again stopped by the many ceremonies which attended their education, and by the thousand absurd ideas which Mr. Fleming had imbibed, with regard to the children of people of a certain rank.

In short, Mr. Fleming was a man of mere minutiae and ceremony ; his very soul had felt the influence of his dancing-master, and seemed

to have been put in the stocks with his feet. He attempted to form himself upon the model of Chesterfield, according to the letter, and not according to the spirit of his system; and became a perfect specimen of an iced man.

His religion and hospitality were all mere ceremony without devotion or heartiness. His ideas of the one were satisfied by the exhibition of his person, and by making the responses in an audible voice, in a crimson-lined pew from a morocco-bound prayer-book; and the duties of the other were performed by periodical state-dinners, in which the admiration of his guests at his wines and entertainment was more considered than the kindness of their welcome.

January and July; Cayenne-pepper and iced-cream; curry-powder and snow; did not form a stronger contrast than Mr. and Mrs. Fleming: and such were the parents of Amelia and Agnes,—the one all FORM, the other all FEELING.

CHAPTER V.

WATERING-PLACES.

Sir Henry.—I tell you, sir, the town's a bore :—there's not a biped in Bond Street, or a quadruped in the Park ; not a breakfast-table occupied at the Cocoa-tree, nor a newspaper read at White's ; not a ray of fashion or a breath of scandal from Hanover Square to Grosvenor Gate.—All the world, sir, is gone to Brighton.

MODERN COM. .

AMONG the many follies of Fashion, “ leader of a chattering train,” which have influenced society in modern times, may be reckoned the absolute necessity there is, for leaving quiet, respectable and comfortable homes, to resort, at a certain period of the year, to some water-

drinking or sea-bathing place. In the days of the Spectator, and up to the middle of the last century, a periodical retreat from London to lounge in the Pump-room at Bath, or walk on the Pantiles at Tunbridge Wells, was considered quite the ton among a certain set of the then exclusives of society ;—all the rest, more wisely and more prudently, quitted their parliamentary sojourn in London, only to benefit their tenants and neighbourhood, by spending the recess, as English noblemen and gentlemen ought to do, upon their own estates ; while the shop of the tradesman and the counting-house of the merchant generally formed the boundaries of their ambition.

At that period, there was not so much timber felled as at present ; nor so many decayed gentry retiring to the Continent ; nor so many merchants and tradesmen figuring away in the Gazette. Those were the days when fat oxen turned entire upon the spit, and barrels of old October flowed among a joyous and hard-working peasantry, when the heir came to the age of twenty-one.

Those were the days, when the squire and his spouse, or the lord and his lady, were the “Bountifuls” of the village in which their mansion was situated; when four or six long-tailed, sleek, and well-fed horses drew the family to church on a Sunday morning, guided by a coachman nearly as fat as his cattle, and dressed in a little curly flaxen wig, with a hat forming a triangle, the square of whose hypothenuse was equal to the square of the two sides.

Those were the times, when the steward’s rent-day was held in the hall, where large joints of beef and mutton, and flagons of ale and stoups of wine graced the side-tables for the refreshment of the tenants; and when the rent-day generally found the said tenants with smiling faces and adequate purses to meet the moderate demands of the landlord: or should any unforeseen calamity, any great expense arising from sickness, or bad crops, have made the rent-money short, why the tenant came with what he could scrape together, and the remainder was either remitted, or a convenient day for

payment named, according to the circumstances. The landlord too, in those days, was often there to shake his tenantry by the rough hands which cultivated his estate—to inquire into their affairs—ask after their dames and their families, and pay those thousand little attentions so grateful to the humble from the exalted: and the few who felt the payment of their rent a hardship, were thus frequently sent away conciliated and satisfied, and overflowing with praises of the squire's kindness.

The landholder's wealth in those times circulated around its source: the benefit of the landlord and tenant was mutual; the latter calculated on a certain profit to be made from the custom of the family at the hall, and this gave the former a greater certainty of his rents. The landlord, too, knew his own tenantry, and the value of his own estate from his own inspection, and not through the medium of a steward or solicitor, whose sole aim in its administration is to feather his own nest at the expense of both parties.

Such a secession as this from the life which

his rank or public business compelled him to lead in London during the season, added to his power in the county, and to his general respectability ; while it saved a country gentleman from needless expenditure. But those days are gone by :—Fashion deemed it better to fly from the shade of the oaks and groves of their ancestors to scorch on the arid cliffs of the ocean.—Physicians wrote up the benefits of sea-bathing :—speculators built houses, warm-baths, libraries, and assembly-rooms, for the accommodation of visitors. The pursuits of a London season were transferred to the sea-side ; and a London winter was seldom finished without a series of engagements to meet at some of the mushroom watering-places, with which the coast of England has been covered within these last fifty years.

Large family-mansions with their splendid halls and staircases, oak dining-parlours, well-furnished libraries, and magnificent saloons, are shut up and deserted, for miserably built square houses with thin walls, through which the sun and rain penetrate,—perpendicular montagnerrusse staircases, that threaten the inhabitants

with a dislocation of their necks,—windows without shutters, and with sashes that rattle in every gust of wind till they make one's teeth clatter in unison,—boards that creak with every footstep—and furniture purchased in Moorfields, or Broker's Row; and yet their temporary inhabitants are content with these sorry accommodations, or rather with this absolute want of accommodation, merely because Fashion has prescribed a residence at a watering-place. Yes; those who would scarcely feel themselves easy in London, or their own mansion, on any *fauteuil* or *Boethema*, that was not turned out by an Orchard, a Gillow, a Graham, or a Tatham, are content with chairs, the seats of which would scarcely serve for the perch of a sparrow; with a sofa, whose cushions would be considerably benefited by Macadamisation; beds with scarcely enough feathers to cover half a dozen stubble geese; and pillows as flat as ham-sandwiches.

The mania, however, did not long confine itself to fashionable circles: those were followed by the professional man and the merchant, and these again by the shopkeeper, until there is hardly

a grade of society, a portion of which does not migrate for the summer to some watering-place.

Those, who were formerly content with a lodging at Kentish Town or Stockwell, must now go to Brighton, or Worthing, or Margate; and their suburban lodgings are occupied by those who never, in the olden 'time, thought of any thing in the way of country, but a pot of mignonette or a scarlet-runner in the window, and an occasional saunter to Primrose Hill on a Sunday. Primrose Hill is, however, no longer out of town: the buildings of the Regent's Park have extended to its very base. The poor citizen must go a day's journey from his confined place of business before he gets into fresh air or a green field; and a Sunday hack founders from fatigue, if hired from the middle of the Metropolis, before he gets on to a regular dusty, thorough-paced turnpike-road.

The cits, therefore, take their country pleasures not by retail as formerly, but in the lump; and so make a month's excursion to some gay and dashing watering-place, where they elbow their betters, and escape unknown.

The choice of the place in which this annual sojourn shall be made, is as various as the occupation of those who make them.

Your upper shopkeeper and his wife, who have been saving a per-centage out of the till with the view to this excursion, which makes them the envy of their less rich or more prudent neighbour, who confines the summer pleasures of himself and spouse to Highbury Barn and Kentish Town, choose Margate; not only because it presents more entertainment in balls, theatres, and libraries, but because the convenience of the hoy affords a cheap facility of keeping an eye on the till, and of seeing how matters go on at the shop, at the expense of a very few shillings, and not much sea-sickness.

Your stockbroker chooses Brighton, because he can run down the fifty-four miles after Change, and be in town in the morning, time enough for all the Bulls and Bears, his contemporaries and opponents in the art of buying for money and the account.

Your "would-be" genteel people, who would feel ashamed in the ensuing winter to answer

the question of—"Where did you go last summer?" with the word "Margate," choose Ramsgate; that the vulgar pleasures of the other place may be within their occasional reach, to vary the ennui and constraint of Ramsgate gentility.

Young ladies and lovers prefer Worthing, Eastbourne, and the quieter places; which now afford, along the coast, little neat lodgings with dimity beds, pink curtains, white fronts, green doors, brass knockers, and Venetian blinds, and form the very places for flirtation.

Your lovers of the picturesque take a start to the Isle of Wight, for the purpose of pedestrianising to Bon-Church and Steep Hill; or if they are rich enough, stretch their flight as far as Swansea or Tenbigh, or the Lakes, that they may talk about the mountains and mountaineers of Wales—sympathise with the two famous female recluses of Llangothlin; or criticise and quote Wordsworth, Wilson, and Southey—write sonnets on Windermere; and fill their bums and diaries with sketches of ruins, descriptions of scenery, and details of sensations.

Many are the motives which take people to bathing-places: your invalid goes for health—your citizen for relaxation—your *ennuyé* for variety: some go to blow off the smoke of London by the keen breezes of the surrounding downs; others, under the idea of preserving and lengthening their lives, by pickling themselves in the sea. Various motives take various people; but Fashion alone took Mr. Fleming and his family to Brighton.

He never chose that season of the year at which the sea-breezes and country air are in reality the pleasantest; but precisely at that period at which Fashion has decreed that they are the most wholesome he never failed in his annual excursion, and more particularly when the presence of royalty attracted all the *attachés* of the court, and made it still more fashionable to be at Brighton.

To such a man as Mr. Fleming, one may easily suppose, that the nod of royalty was wealth and pleasure. He could breathe freely in the atmosphere of a court, because restraint was natural to him; and therefore he was never

himself amidst that freedom of general society which sanctioned greater liberties than were accordant with his notions of propriety.

He was perpetually thinking that one person did not treat him with sufficient respect; that the freedom of another was ill-bred; that this person laughed too loud, or that another talked too long; that one interrupted him in the midst of his argument; that another did not listen with sufficient attention. He lived upon the minutiae of society, instead of its general principles; and seemed perpetually to be separating the atmosphere in which he breathed, into the particles of which it is composed. He looked upon its constitution as upon a piece of mechanism, of which he only saw the cogs of the wheels fitting into each other as they revolved, without understanding the principles of the machinery.

But in the etiquette of a courtly circle, he was never offended. . None could take a liberty, excepting those from whom a liberty might be deemed a condescension, and considered an honour.

In such a circle, such a man as Mr. Fleming

was in his element; and as his *entrée* only extended to those general occasions where the etiquette is strictly observed, his ideas of courtly propriety were never shocked by that freedom of conversation and discussion which the urbanity of its chief always cultivated, and encouraged in those who are admitted to the more domestic circle of his interior.

Some few years since, Brighton was not the overgrown place it has now become, although even then it was the epitome of London.

On its Steyne, and along its open and sandy beach, might be seen the gay and gallant soldier and courtier mingled with the portly citizen and the humble shopkeeper. Muslin wrappers, and bright-coloured ribands were every day floating in the light breezes which came freshened across the waters of the ocean.—Young eyes and hearts sparkled and danced in the clear and bright sunshine, which added animation to the already animated scene that its cliffs and arid promenades presented.—Young ladies were seen equestrianising on donkeys to the Devil's Dyke; and elderly matrons airing in flies, with bodies

which, in comparison with their carriages, appeared like unwieldy tortoises on the legs of a caterpillar. In short, Brighton was then in its infancy; and there was a lightness, a gaiety, a nonchalance about its pursuits, which its subsequent corpulence has destroyed.

There were then no unwieldy building speculations to interrupt the expansion of views over the healthy Downs. No packs of half-bred harriers to tempt the equestrian dexterity of a citizen to attend the "throwing off," to the eminent hazard of his neck. No Chain Pier to invite the evening *tête-à-tête*, and to astonish by the lightness and science of its construction.

The visitors, too, were then contented with the "chicken" gaming which was prevalent at the libraries, where the utmost risk was a few shillings, and the ultimate gain a work-box of Tunbridge ware, or a smelling-bottle, which was devoted to some fair one by the fortunate winner. None had thought of setting up what are so appropriately termed "hells," or instituting club-houses for the admission of "exclusives." Every thing then bespoke an air of liberty and non-

chalance; all seemed to be devoted to amusement. A meeting at a library or in a ball-room was sufficient to authorise occasional gossip; and morning rencontres in dressing-gowns at the bathing-place, was considered enough to constitute a temporary acquaintance.

True, on a return to town, the watering-place acquaintance was dropped. The parties we gossiped with, in familiar intercourse about sea-gulls and sea-breezes on the Steyne, or danced with in a Brighton ball-room, under the authorised introduction of an ex-military master of the ceremonies, were cut in a rencontre in Pall-Mall, Hyde Park, or the Exhibition.

The girl with whom we had condescended to flirt and talk nonsense, on a morning ramble upon donkeys to Rottendean, was overlooked when an occasional visit of her city papa to the opera placed her in our way in the crush-room, to which perhaps ~~she~~ had urged her family, under the hope of meeting her Brighton beau, and renewing her sentimental flirtation, little thinking that the circumstances, and conversation, and compliments, which had made a lasting

impression on her memory, and grown into consequence by her repeated contemplation of them, had been the mere butterflies of a moment with him, as ephemeral as the breath with which they had been uttered, or the marks with which he had perhaps traced her initials in the sand.

Now, society at Brighton is on a different construction. There are no accidental rencontres and mere occasional acquaintance. People only speak to their own set; and a proper and formal introduction is as necessary as it is in London.

All this rendered Brighton the most congenial place in the world to Mr. Fleming. To him it was necessary to breathe the atmosphere of fashion; all other collision was disagreeable; and, therefore, though the quietude of their own estate would have been more conducive to the health of Mrs. Fleming, to Brighton went the family, with a cavalcade of imperial-crowned carriages, which drove up with the whole establishment to their house on the Steyne, to the great pleasure of a hundred attendant trades-

men, and to the delight of Martha Gunn, the bathing-woman, whose amphibious appearance and extraordinary strength was at that period the astonishment of every Brighton visitor: she was the Moll Flagon of that day; and even Liston might have taken a hint from her in his unrivalled personification of that character.

Poor Gunn, she is gone off at last.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHILDREN'S BALL.

Come, and trip it as you go,
On the light fantastic toe.

MILTON.

Chassez quatre—cavalier seul—
Pastourelle—balancez—grande ronde.

D'EGVILLE.

ALL the family were soon settled in Brighton. The establishment was as complete as in London; for Mr. Fleming's wealth carried every convenience of life with him. In his house there were no make-shifts; every thing was perfectly well appointed, or perhaps too well appointed; for there was an appearance of study even in the

modern negligence of his drawing-room and library; and with all these appurtenances of fashion, London hours and customs were, of course, imported likewise.

On their arrival, they found cards were just issued for a juvenile ball to be given to the little scions of the fashionable *elite* at Brighton. It would not do for the Flemings to be left out: their names were therefore immediately inserted among those on the list at the Pavilion.

Many were the joyful glances and beating hearts that hailed with gratified pride the arrival of the envied talisman that was to admit them to the fairy scene; and many the compressed lip and bitter look of disappointment, and affectedly careless toss of the head, that was occasioned by the necessity of saying "No," to the question of "Have you a card?"

By these anxiously expecting persons, every knock at the door and every ring of the bell was listened to with anxiety, and followed by disappointment and an emphatic "Psha" as the servant presented on his silver salver the card of some indifferent person. Some contrived that their

equipages should be seen constantly dashing in all the most frequented promenades—while others made bolder advances, by leaving their names at the Pavilion, to remind the inmates that they were still at Brighton.

The utmost number of cards had, however, been issued; and many who were left out immediately quitted Brighton for the time; thus at once framing by their absence an apology for their being uninvited, and withdrawing themselves from the enjoyment which their hundred “dear friends” expressed by their eyes, while they condoled with their lips on the disappointment.

To how many malevolent passions of our nature do the most trivial occurrences of life give the opportunity of display! They seem always on the watch—slumbering but not sleeping, and ready on the slightest occasion to rush into action.

All was now hurry and bustle amidst the milliners and mantua-makers at Brighton. Every shop made daily a display of new articles from London and Paris, and many of the great

fashionable professors of flounces and furbelows, either came upon voluntary speculation, or were sent for by the more fastidious, to reap their share, or rather more than their share of the profits of what the saints would call ‘this vanity fair.’

The mammaß and ladies'-maids, and governesses, did not devote their attention to the little silk and satin slips, and pink sashes, and lace frocks, of the little ladies for whom the ball was professedly given, without considering the dress of the mammas themselves. Ambition was not gratified that the children only should outvie those of their friends, but that the parents should also outshine each other.

From childhood upwards we must say,
We grow but greater children every day.

But every thing is for the best; and thus maternal and personal vanity, the one excusable, the other despicable, furnished food and employment to a number of persons who were before idle and penniless—who had been, either listlessly lounging through their empty show-

rooms in London, or regretting a profitless season at Brighton.

One often wonders that the railers against the expense and luxury of the rich and great, never recur to the good which these expenses and luxuries produce. Where would be the poor artisan? where the labouring mechanic? where the thousands with no vocation whatever, and who get their bread by servitude?—without the luxury which the cynic and the radical would stigmatise by the terms “wicked and useless.”

What a common observation is it among this class of persons to exclaim, “Shame upon the rich and noble of the land, who are rioting in the luxuries of profusion; who revel in the feast and bask in the sunshine of pleasure—while the poor are starving!”

What is so likely to give bread to those who want it, as the luxuries which produce employment? Is it not evident that the superfluities of the rich provide for the necessities of the poor?

For our own part, we never see the shining

satins and waving ribands moving through a quadrille, without casting a thought upon the sums which their destruction keeps in action ; never sit down to a magnificent dinner, or splendid supper, without thinking of the variety of pastry-cooks, bakers, butchers, grocers, poulterers, wine-merchants, and fifty other tradesmen, with their numerous servants and dependants, who are put in requisition upon the occasion. We consider luxury and expense, therefore, among the duties entailed upon greatness and wealth. By this means riches are distributed through all the ramifications of society, from the highest to the lowest ; from the duke who, with silk-clad legs spread upon carpets of Turkey, slices his pine-apple or sugars his orange at night to the sounds of Mozart or Rossini ; to the dustman who clears away the peels and the parings in the morning, to the stentorian “ Dust ho !” and the astounding tintinabulum of the licensed scavenger.

It is these indulgences of the noble landlord which enable his tradesman tenant to pay his rent ; and thus the perpetual circulation is pre-

served and continued, flowing from its source, and gradually returning from whence it came; but like a generous river, having watered and refreshed thousands in its progress.

We beg pardon for a digression into any thing that may be deemed an abstract subject, but we earnestly recommend a due consideration of the preceding remarks to those, who, from mistaken motives, are too apt to consider the luxuries of the great a useless prodigality.

From the high rank of Mrs. Fleming's family, from the charm which her talents, even amidst all the blight of her warm feelings, was known to spread over every circle which she frequented, as well as from the two boroughs which Mr. Fleming's wealth had enabled him to procure, and the ministerial use he made of his votes, his family were insured from the disappointment which so many had occasion to lament; and perhaps the last was the most influential reason for his invitation.

Mrs. Fleming's maternal heart was gratified with the pleasure she anticipated for her children; Mr. Fleming's consequence was elated; and

Lady Pomeroy's vanity excited, by the card which lay at the top of those which already crowded the porcelain tray that graced the table of Mrs. Fleming's drawing-room.

Many were the lectures and numerous the private drillings which the anxious Lady Pomeroy bestowed upon her favourite Amelia :

Hands, lips, and eyes, were put to school,
And each instructed feature had its rule :

and to do her justice on this occasion, Agnes might also have participated in her cares, but that her little heart was so impatient in her anticipations, that she could brook no control, and give no time to the necessary attentions which her aunt required.

Lady Pomeroy impressed upon the mind of Amelia the high and courtly personages she was to meet. Agnes could think of nothing but the dance she was going to enjoy. At length the wished-for evening came—the mysteries of the toilet were completed—Amelia and Agnes were paraded in the drawing-room to the great delight of the father's pride, the mother's affec-

tion, and the aunt's vanity ; and away rolled the whole group with beating hearts to the scene of princely festivity.

During the ride Amelia preserved her gravity, and never moved from a position in which it was impossible to crush one of the fragile flounces with which her dress was decorated, or disturb the long and beautiful ringlets into which her hair had been trained. Agnes, on the contrary, was wild with expectation, as numerous carriages dashed by their own, either going to or returning from the Pavilion ; exclamations of regret at not having arrived, and of fear of being too late for the first quadrille, by turns escaped from her parted lips, as she strained her eyes to catch the first glimpse of the blaze of illumination which surrounded the Pavilion, and lighted up the faces of a thousand spectators, which the hope of seeing the company alight from their carriages had collected together.

At length her impatience was gratified—the carriage approached the door—the noiseless steps were let down, and the names of Mr. and

Mrs. Fleming and family were passed from servant to servant, till they reached the doors of the reception-room.

Even Amelia's quiet and controlled heart beat a little quicker as she was condescendingly noticed *en passant* by one of those sentences which are the cheap yet amiable commodities with which princes can purchase popularity; and even the impatient queries of Agnes were for a moment hushed to silence, as a royal hand parted the raven locks on her forehead to have a clearer view of the animated countenance which they shaded.

Every thing excited the wonder of Agnes—the splendour of the hangings—the *bizarre* costume of the decorations—the brilliant plumage of the painted birds which seemed to fly over the walls—and above all, the union of Oriental splendour with English comfort—all conspired to embody her notions of the magnificent festivals of which she had read in the *Thousand and One Nights*, and the *Tales of the Genii*.

By the bye, Sheridan used to say of the first, that they were read twice with equal delight;

in infancy, with wonder and amusement, and in manhood, with instruction, as the best illustrations of Eastern manners and customs. -

Royalty, rank, splendour, every thing was, however, forgotten by Agnes the moment her heart felt (for her heart *did* feel them) the exhilarating sounds of the harp and the mirthful notes of the violins.

Quadrilles were soon formed—every thing was so well arranged, that none wanted partners—all the young party were assembled, and the dancing was about to commence.—Amelia advanced to her set with the dignity of a peacock—Agnes sprang to her place with the agility of a fawn; and to the annoyance of Lady Pomeroy, burst the white sandal which was gracefully crossed over her taper ankle. The two ribands lay about half a yard upon the ground like streamers. But Agnes, quite unabashed, and not seeing the frowns of her aunt, soon disentangled her shoe from the stray ribands, and was in a moment with all her heart and soul in the mysteries of the *chassée*, *la trenise*, and *grande ronde*.

All the parents and spectators arranged themselves around the room appropriated to dancing, so that they commanded a full view of the young votaries of Terpsichore; each one anxious for the success of their little *protégées*, many of whom had never exhibited any where but in the school-room, with D'Egville or Mrs. Elliston watching the progress of their steps, and correcting all their little *faux pas* as soon as they were committed.

An assembly of children with animated and smiling countenances—their eyes lighted up with pleasure—and all engaged in innocent amusement, is a beautiful sight. The careless hilarity, the absence of restraint, the lip, as yet unused to any thing but smiles; and the eye, yet unsullied by any tear, except those springing from the momentary vexations of the nursery and the school-room, give an interest to juvenile parties which others cannot possess. The contemplation carries us back to childhood—we again live over our infant years—we recollect our own infantine delight at the first ball we were permitted to attend—the effects of the ‘fairy

scene upon our young minds—our astonishment at the variety of things which have since become common to us—the pride with which we heard a murmur of approbation at some well-executed *entrechat*, (for there is no period of life when we are insensible to praise, or quite free from vanity): we recollect, in short, when we were as careless, and happy, and (what was better) as innocent as the children before us; and the recollection is as interesting as it is melancholy.

Perhaps a juvenile assembly of this kind derives its principal interest from the innocence of the parties of which it is composed. It is an assemblage of youth not yet *usé* in the world—of hearts upon which envy, avarice, dissipation, and profligacy, have yet made no inroads,—whose minds are still like the pure pages in Locke's system of the human understanding, yet unblotted by the sad experience of life. It is an assemblage of lips and hearts unacquainted with worldly sorrow or guilty pleasure, dancing over paths of flowers which precede the rougher track of more advanced life, and whose per-

spective of existence is bounded by the vacation, which releases them from the control of the school-room, by any little pleasure that has been promised, or any trivial punishment that has been threatened.

An additional interest to the present party was given by the idea, that the boys who were here dancing with infantine carelessness, were those who, when men, would most likely be our senators, our generals, and our rulers; for it is from this class of society that they are principally chosen; though fortunately we do live in a country, where honours are open to all, and the path to riches and fame closed upon none, who have talent to enter it, and energy and perseverance to pursue it.

Amelia moved through all her steps with the grace and precision of a proficient. Agnes bounded through her part in the dance as though her heart kept company with her feet. Her eyes sparkled with delight—every energy of which her little form was capable was in full exertion. Her ringlets waved unrestrained around her forehead and shoulders, and she

seemed completely in that state, which the French call *abandonnement* ; and in the midst of all, she was perfectly unconscious of the admiration which her animated display was exciting. At length, her quadrille over, she had leisure to attend to her partner, and for the first time felt, from his height, and the superior quietness of his manners, that he was more of a man than his companions.

For a moment, a slight sense of, she knew not what, lighted up her countenance with a blush of consciousness which most intelligibly said, “ What can he think of me ? ” He had, however, been delighted with the heart and soul which she had infused into every thing she did ; and as he drew her arm within his, paid her his boyish compliments with an air which, at the same time that it showed he considered her as a mere child, seemed to say, he began to think *himself* arrived at the first stage of manhood.

At first Agnes was a little dashed with this appearance of superiority ; but it soon wore off. As the first ice which her partner handed her

diminished, so faded the ice between herself and him. A thousand questions were asked and answered. "Do you like dancing?"—"Oh amazingly!" and "Who is this? and who is that?"—and "What is this? and what is that?" as a thousand curiosities attracted her attention. From these subjects they passed to others of more immediate interest to themselves. The whole of their own little histories were detailed to each other. Before their ice and quadrille was ended, Agnes had told her partner all the secrets of her nursery—the plagues of her governess, with her *régime*—her calisthenics—and her ceremonies—her fear of her papa and her devoted love for her mother. The Honourable Master Trevor had sense enough to enjoy the openness and sincerity of heart with which all this childish detail was made, and, in return, informed his now listening companion, that he was an Eton boy; proudly boasted of his exploits at cricket and the last Montem—of his excursions to Windsor—and all the numerous tricks in which he had joined his school companions, and the jeopardy in which they placed him; to all of

which the interested Agnes listened with nearly as much attention, as we may suppose Desdemona paid to the “hair-breadth ’scapes” of Othello.

In the mean time, Amelia passed through the evening entirely to the satisfaction of Lady Pomeroy, and when the banquet was announced, displayed her ringlets and her dress free from the slightest disarrangement, and a cheek quite unheated from dancing.

Agnes, on the contrary, with a glowing cheek, and panting from exertion, again took the arm of Trevor, who folded her shawl over her shoulders with a grace that would have done honour to three-and-twenty, instead of fifteen, which were all the summers he had yet numbered—and life had, as yet, been summer to him. The liveliness of the one, and the attention of the other, had been a source of attraction to each of these young people; and with that incipient feeling, which in after-life grows into flirtation, they had agreed, early in the evening, to manage matters so as to sit next to each other at supper.

The shawl was made the convenience to ac-

comply with this, and they followed the crowd, and placed themselves at the table with hearts, in which there was not one feeling discordant with the gaiety which pervaded the scene.

How different from those who contemplated them ! how many anxious and corroded hearts ; how many grievous feelings ; how many fears of the loss of royal favour ; and how many hopes of supplanting each other, were concealed under the diamond stomachers and necklaces, and blue and red ribands, and sparkling stars which surrounded them !

How lamentable, that in time, all those hearts which were then so light and gay, should become corrupted by passions which spring up in a court as in a hotbed ! How melancholy, that the open brow should in time become contracted with all the baneful feelings of envy ; and that court intrigue should succeed to all the emulation of excellence, which is the only characteristic of youthful ambition !

Amelia sipped her wine, and played with her trifle in silence, uninterrupted, except by an elegant inclination of her head, when one of her

youthful partners challenged her to a glass of wine.

Agnes, delighted by the thousand forms of temples, cascades, pyramids, coronets, &c. into which the barley-sugar had been tortured by the confectioner's ingenuity, and which did indeed glitter in the blaze of a hundred wax candles, like fairy palaces of amber, could not conceal her delight, but rattled forth her admiration to the amusement of the courtly people who were immediately around her, while Lady Pomeroy looked and frowned, and nodded her head in vain.

At length the carriages began to be announced, and the unwelcome sound of "Lady Trevor's carriage is ready," struck upon the ears of Agnes and her youthful partner.

With childish delight they had enjoyed every thing together—all was pleasure—and they had never thought of parting, or dreamt there could be one unpleasant sensation attendant upon an evening of so much enjoyment.

Young as they were, however, the moment

of separation gave a pang for which neither of them could account, and which neither of them could understand.

Trevor tendered his hand to her for the last time, and was whirled away in his mother's carriage, leaving Agnes, to her great surprise, no longer the pleased spectatress of the magnificence before her. The separation from her partner had left a blank which there was nothing to fill up; from the almost romp, she became silent and pensive—the lights seemed no longer to burn so brightly—the pastry palaces had lost their claims to admiration—the sparkling of the champagne had evaporated—she became listless and fatigued, and she sat absorbed in herself, silent and sorrowful, and almost in tears, in the midst of that very scene, which a few moments before had so much delighted her; and listened now as anxiously for, as just before she had dreaded, the announcement of her mother's carriage, which soon bore her and her sister to their homes, where sleep soon gave to them again the fairy scene of the royal revels.

Happy stage of life, when sleep and a few hours are sufficient to obliterate the greatest evils incidental to it—when our pleasures leave the heart uncorrupted, and when our sorrows are washed out by the tears they occasion—

Those tears forgot as soon as shed.

•CHAPTER VII.

INCIPIENT FLIRTATION.

Oh ! how this spring of love resembleth
The uncertain glory of an April day ;
Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,
And by and by a cloud takes all away.

SHAKESPEARE.

IN the midst of the blaze of fashion, and of the strivings of envy, it was acknowledged on all hands that our two little heroines bore the belle at the juvenile ball. The mother's heart beat with joy at their praises, as well as at the contemplation of their pleasures. Mr. Fleming was delighted that they had attracted the notice of such distinguished persoyages ;

and Lady Pomeroy expressed in elaborate terms her pleasure at the encomiums bestowed on the manner, and carriage, and conduct of her favourite ; and thus all parties were pleased.

At the school-room breakfast, Agnes resumed her wonted spirits, and chatted over the events of the ball, and her admiration of its splendour, with her usual *naïveté*, expressing all the delight she felt, and wishing that every evening would present a new ball for her enjoyment.

Little, at that age, do we imagine how soon the heart becomes satiated with such scenes ; and how little do we understand the want of interest which grown-up persons feel for them. In childhood, we think their enjoyment is to last for ever ; and we only wonder, that those who have all these pleasures at command, from being free from the control of governesses and parents, seem so little to enjoy them. But pleasures are like pastry—a child looking at the tempting show of a confectioner's shop wishes itself grown up, that it may enjoy the sweets to repletion. The time when our purse and our power to accomplish this arrives, and we find

the wish no longer in existence. Tarts, jellies, and sweetmeats, have lost their powers of temptation ; the heart and its passions have come into play ; and the lesser appetites and senses are forgotten amidst the *bruyant* enjoyment or the despairing disappointment of the nobler or the guiltier feelings of our nature.

Yet in these early days, it is but natural to imagine that there must be dispositions from which the future character may be prophesied. The courage of the boy may speak the future hero—his perseverance and industry in life, of the future accumulation of wealth—his acuteness or aptness at calculation, speak the future financier or the embryo mathematician : while the girl, in her attention to her dolls in the nursery, or in her devotion to her looking-glass as she trims her infant curls, may designate the future mother of a family, or show the incipient coquette.

We have often thought that an inquiry into the infancy and childhood of those who have been celebrated on the theatre of the world, and who have played the prominent parts of life's

drama, would afford a most interesting speculation to the philosopher, and a great development of the progress of the human mind.

One is curious to know, whether the childhood of a Bacon, a Newton, or a Boyle, displayed any of the incipient characteristics of the great and sublime pursuits which rendered them afterwards so celebrated as philosophers; whether Buonaparte, as a boy among his comrades, gave any signs of that grasping ambition and that indomitable character which raised him, and his country through him, to an unparalleled pitch of greatness, and which ended in the signal defeat of France and her armies, and of the imprisonment and death of himself, as a miserable, solitary exile, with scarcely the power to ride over a league of ground, after having reigned over one of the most flourishing empires of Europe, and given laws to every other kingdom it contained—*save one.*

One would like to know, whether the infant years of a Staël, or of a Wolstoncraft, gave any tokens among their nursery playmates of that strength and manliness of mind, which in the

one led to the most successful efforts in literature and philosophy, and in the other to that glaring defiance of established customs and conventional ideas of propriety, which she set at nought by her actions, while she defended those actions by her pen.

Again, in casting our eyes over the numerous catalogue of human crimes and frailties; over the list of those who have perished on the scaffold, or have died the more painful and lingering death, the result of blasted character and the world's scorn—one would wish to know if the germs of their turpitude were perceptible in the days which are generally those of innocence.

Whether the cold-blooded murderer, in after life, was distinguished by a peculiar cruelty to his companions, or to insects and animals, in his infancy—whether the forger and the thief betrayed any propensity to dishonesty in their youth; and whether the frail fair one who has passed the evening of her life as a *divorcée*, has been the mere victim of a temporary and overwhelming passion, created and directed by some

master-spirit of a libertine; or whether her childhood had been characterised by that female coquetry and flirtation, which are but the embryo qualities of the crime of which they are so often the consequence.

It would be curious to trace the human mind either to the perfection of greatness, or to the completion of crime: to trace the hero from his play at prisoner's-base, where he domineered over his school-mates, to the battle by which he gains or loses an empire:—the murderer, from spinning a cockchafer or taking a bird's-nest, to the moment when his hand is dyed in the blood of the heart he has stabbed, or the throat he has cut; and the wanton and profligate, from the first germs of coquetry and vanity, to that period when she is the “scorned of all observers,” and the admitted companion only of those who spare themselves the necessity of blushing, by living with those as infamous as themselves.

We really beg pardon for such a digression; but the contemplation of the childhood of our heroine, led us into a labyrinth of reflection from which we could not disentangle ourselves with-

out a few pages of discussion of the subject, by which we hoped to discover whether these children of our imagination were naturally described as showing so plainly the dispositions which were to give the character to their future lives.

Whether the present characters of Amelia and Agnes gave already indications—the one, of a creature all “form;” and the other, of a being all “feeling;” and whether we might prophesy those events of their after-life, which it is the intention of these pages to record.

The Trevors and the Flemings, although moving in the same circle, were not intimate: they met in the unceasing round of fashion; but they did not visit.

The Trevors, proud of an ancient name and of a family that could reckon sixteen quarterings in their heraldry, looked upon Mr. Fleming as a *parvenu*; and Mr. Fleming, with all his innate respect for legitimate rank, still felt the consequence and pride of wealth, and was offended at the little attention that was paid him by the Trevors.

For these slights, Mr. Fleming consoled him-

self by the superiority of his establishment, and by the splendour of his parties, while the Trevors affected to despise the magnificent entertainments to which they received no cards; and to consider and talk of them as the attempts of a *parvenu*, to hide the meaness of his origin in the gorgeous and tasteless display of the wealth which purchased his place in society.

It was true, Mrs. Fleming's family on both sides was equal with their own; but then a woman reduces herself to the same rank with the man she marries, but never elevates him to her own; and Mrs. Fleming was not a woman to receive attentions that did not extend to her husband, or to keep up connexions with any acquaintance that in the least degree slighted Mr. Fleming, to whom she made a point of performing all those duties and attentions which were within her own power to command, the more punctiliously, because she was conscious there were many into which she had never yet been able to school that heart, which had been won and lost before he had any claim to its affections.

These feelings on each side had kept the families of the Trevors and the Flemings separate ; but the young people were of that happy age which knew not, or did not understand, these distinctions ; and the next morning after the ball, therefore, brought young Trevor to pay a visit to his little partner.

This was an attention, however, which was so much disapproved by his lady-mother, and so very coldly received by Mr. Fleming, that it was not repeated ; and our young Etonian was compelled to watch for the Miss Flemings in their walks, as the only means of continuing his acquaintance with Agnes.

The fact was, that Trevor at fifteen, from his association with boys of sixteen and eighteen who imagined themselves men, began to think that he was himself approaching to the period when he might be designated Mister instead of Master ; and having been really struck with the fascinating spirits of Agnes, he fancied himself in love, and began to think that he should himself have a confidential communication to make to his school-circle in return for those to

which he had often listened, and wondered when he too should find an opportunity of performing the same feats as those detailed by his companions.

The house occupied by the Trevors was not so far distant from the Flemings, but that our youthful sprig of nobility could watch the movements of the young ladies : the moment, therefore, that they quitted the Steyne with their governess, was the signal for the commencement of his own morning excursion.

While within sight of his domicile, he wandered carelessly along the cliff ; but still with his eye fixed upon the objects of his pursuit,—for he had learned a few of the *ruses d'amour* from his more experienced companions at Eton,—as soon, however, as he imagined himself out of the pale of observation, he quickened his pace, and directed it towards the little group of pedestrians on the beach, whom he soon contrived to overtake.

His presence was always welcome to Agnes, because it gave her the opportunity of talking of the juvenile ball, and was never unacceptable

to Amelia, because he was never deficient in those attentions which her aunt had always taught her to expect as her due from the other sex ; and Amelia, cold as she was, was much more versed in all these technicalities than Agnes, who was only to be taught the value of these attentions by her own heart.

When the governess was with them, Trevor knew how to make himself welcome by a hundred little flattering words, which were rendered still more acceptable by coming from the lips of a little honourable ; and when they were only accompanied by their maid, he remembered how maids had been silenced by his companions in the neighbourhood of Windsor, and he tried the same recipe. Boys learn something at Eton ; and so they ought, for it is an expensive place.

By this perseverance, and these means, he contrived generally to be the companion of their morning stroll. He wandered with them on the cliff—picked up shells and star-fish for them on the beach—became an expert Macadamiser of pebbles—threw ducks and drakes on the

bright calm sea—and made love to Agnes in his boyish way; that is, they stood on the margin of the tide, till the white curling wave rose to their feet, and then he would snatch her away before it could wet her black satin slippers—then he would look out for the prettiest pebbles and shells—climb the cliff for any flower that graced the sterile rock—or dash into the wave to rescue a piece of sea-weed from the retreating tide to add to her collection. But in the midst of these more boisterous and boyish attentions to Agnes, he never forgot to pay others to Amelia, which were quite as acceptable, since he never presented a pebble or a shell without a bow; and he became a favourite of her's, because he never met or parted from her without taking off his hat; and though she was shocked at the hearty shaking of hands, which was the never-failing accompaniment of the meeting and separation of Agnes and Trevor; and though she could never join in their hearty laughs which were echoed by the cliffs when the waves were too quick for them, and filled their shoes with salt-water; yet his perpetual polite-

ness—his never-failing attention when there was a channel furrowed into the sand by the sea, or any piece of rock in the way to be got over, reconciled her to his company, and she always welcomed him with her placid smile.

As for Agnes, she knew nothing—she thought of nothing but the enjoyment of the moment. She delighted in the company of Trevor, because he entered into her amusements—all was gaiety and sunshine :

No sense had she of ills to come.

No care beyond to-day.

Trevor himself knew not the nature of his own feelings; he was in a precocious state of boyhood. He had heard his elder companions talk of love, and boast of successes, of the meaning of which he was ignorant. He saw Agnes; his young heart and imagination were attracted by her charms of person, and her *naïveté* of conversation, and he thought it would be manly, and give him something to tell about on his return to Eton; having, in his own mind, determined to represent his lady as a girl of six-

teen, instead of thirteen. With this view, he pursued with indefatigable perseverance his morning rambles, for the purpose of joining the sisters, till he experienced sensations for the youthful Agnes, that, young as he was, made his meeting with her a happiness, and his parting from her a misery.

Before he sought his pillow at night he would throw up his sash and look if there were a light still in her window, and his first glance in the morning was in the same direction.

Perhaps, too, his youthful vanity was flattered by the evident pleasure with which his attentions were received, and a zest was added to these meetings by the necessity which his heart taught him there was for some degree of secrecy, as to the extent of the attentions he was paying to this branch of the family of the Flemings.

He pretended to think, also, that he was really in love; for youthful hearts will magnify their sensations; and what he felt, though nothing like that manly passion which inspires us in after life, was set down by Trevor as love; and, naturally enough, he interpreted the evi-

dent pleasure with which the young Agnes received his little gallantries into a reciprocal feeling ; and,

Pleas'd with this flattering thought, the love-sick boy,
Felt the faint dawning of a doubtful joy.

And which of us has not felt the same ?—which of us does not recollect some incipient feeling of this kind, which threw a sunshine and an interest over our childish days ? and ah—alas ! how many are there, who can look back to this infant passion, as the only true one they ever felt ; all the subsequent feelings of their hearts having the alloy of worldly interest to deteriorate and destroy them !

It is a melancholy thing to live in a world where the general result of experience, and the principal result of knowledge, is to deaden and repress the earliest, and, perhaps, the first feelings of our nature.

But a truce with reflections ; they are no part of our narrative ; and since we have arrived at a certain age, we have found reflection very intrusive and troublesome.

Thus matters proceeded at Brighton—the world came and went—stage-coaches increased—the town was full to suffocation—prosperity made the inhabitants insolent—visitors of fashion became disgusted—royalty deserted an ungrateful people, whose fortunes had been made by its sunshine—and Mr. Fleming quitted Brighton.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RECOGNITION.

She pined in thought.

Was not this love indeed?

SHAKESPEARE.

And thus the heart will break, yet brokenly live on.

BYRON.

THE London winter "commencing in July," as Lord Byron satirically observes, had now begun: the streets of St. James's rattled beneath the carriages of the wealthy and fashionable, and the dust of Hyde Park flew in clouds beneath the horses of the *elegants*, who equestrianised, and tilburised, and cabriolised, in the

short intervals between a breakfast at two and a dinner at eight.

All was bustle at the west end of the town; the clubs were full of lounging men, and the milliners' shops were full of expensive women; balls and bible societies were crowded to suffocation; the crush-room was a perfect jam; fans could not keep the Blues cool at the Royal Institution; and Almack's and the House of Commons were well attended.

In short, all London life was at its zenith of animation. Parties both of politics and pleasure ran high and numerous; corn laws, the balance of power, and the Catholic question, occupied the senator in the House; while at the cabinet dinners the fate of Greece was discussed over a turkey; the claimed independence of new empires acknowledged over the ephemeral spirit of champagne, or denied under the influence of more solid and sensible port; extended empire in India was determined on amidst tureens of mulligatawny; the slave-trade and colonial affairs canvassed during the digestion of preserved ginger, and while the rich Cura-

goa still lingered on the palate; and new alliances, defensive and offensive, commercial treaties, and all the other et-ceteras of diplomacy by which the fate of mankind is determined, were discussed at the dessert.

People of mere fashion in the mean time occupied themselves in the more important merits of a new opera, or a newly imported article—lamented the distress of their countrymen, and gave hundreds to some foreign fiddler—wept for the unemployed weavers, and ordered their dresses of French silk—subscribed for the relief of the Worcester glovers, but clothed their taper fingers in Parisian manufacture—wondered at the state of the English drama, and went every night to the Italian Opera and French play, while the national theatres presented nothing but a “beggarly account of empty boxes.”

In short, all the world was occupied as though there were nothing but this world to live for. Trifles appeared, indeed, to form the sum of human existence. Folly and thoughtlessness seemed the general order of the day, and dissi-

pation the regular disorder of the night. Nothing was heard but the din of double knocks, and the cry of carriages: flambeaux flashed their smoky flames around the doors of the splendid and the gay. The quadrille players were in full occupation every night. Cards and commands flew about in all directions, heralding a long series of balls, routs, assemblies, and dinners, and the morning papers teemed with daily descriptions of the results.

All the toad-eaters connected with the public press, and who are only endured in tolerable society from their power to give publicity to the schemes of fashionable attempters at notoriety, were in full request at the gay parties, accounts of which they were expected to furnish in return for the ticket which introduced them into circles to which they were entitled neither by birth, talent, or respectability.

The leader in the House of Commons had opened his budget of new taxes, and the leaders of *ton* had opened their budgets of new follies; the aristocratic committee of the opera had laid the scheme for the ruin of a new lessee;

the *nouvelles chanteuses* and *danseuses*, had all made their *arrangemens* and *liaisons* with the patrons who had procured their engagements, and the season commenced with spirit.

Mrs. Fleming's table was already inundated with those pasteboard conveniences for visiting before the family were completely settled in Grosvenor Square, and she felt herself compelled, in spite of increasing infirmity, to enter on her usual winter life.

Neither the air of the downs nor the breezes of the sea had added to her strength; indeed they were both too sharp; her disorder had rendered her too weak to find any thing but mischief in their bracing qualities; but as she felt it must be the same every where, and that nothing can "administer to a mind diseased," she bore it all calmly, and patiently, and silently, amidst the absurd forms and ceremonies of Lady Pomeroÿ, and the apathy and technical propriety of Mr. Fleming. The more she felt the increase of her complaint, which was, unperceived, and silently, stealing her from life

the more intense became her anxiety for her darling Agnes. It was in vain, amidst her crowd of acquaintance, that she could look for one female friend in whom to confide her fears, on whom she could rely as a guardian and supporter and adviser of her child, when her own guiding spirit should be snatched from her.

All her society consisted only of such persons as came within the pale admitted by Mr. Fleming to be fashionable and proper; and the only one of her sisters who was still living, was a complete, but a mere woman of fashion. All her hope, therefore, and all her trial, was to live.

In the mean time, the different and contrasted characteristics of her two daughters grew with their growth, and strengthened with their strength. Amelia went on progressing in her music, her dancing, and her manners, and time only developed more strongly the ardent temperament, the acute feeling, and the romantic tenderness of Agnes.

For Amelia, her mother could feel little anxiety; life for her seemed destined to be a

smooth stream in which she would sail safely with the current; she had no passions, no feelings to hurry her out of it: but for Agnes, it was far different; with every accession of knowledge came a new sensation; every hour gave indications of a heart that would be the victim of circumstance, and every event of life had some influence upon her character.

It was in vain that her mother wished to repress the ardour of her disposition. The ethereal spirit of existence was too strong within her; she had imbibed too much of her mother's disposition to be guided by the formal rules that influenced Amelia. Her heart required icing by the hand of experience and misfortune, ere it could determine to believe that friendship and feeling were too generally names which engendered nothing but disappointment.

The necessary routine of London life, and such a London life as Mr. Fleming thought proper to lead, inevitably separated Mrs. Fleming more from her children than she wished. Still every moment she could steal from etiquette and fashion was devoted to them—or

rather to Agnes, whose heart she attempted to school, but in vain, into some of those rules which by repressing its ardency might fence it against future disappointment.

About this period, there was a great deal of political discussion on the subject of our India possessions. Great extension of empire in that quarter of the world had been obtained by the British arms:—there were great outcries against the monopolies, the persecutions, the peculations, and the corruptions, which must always exist in large governments so far removed from the seat of the mother-country.

The House of Commons and the daily papers teemed with accusations and defences of the various parties concerned in the administration of that extensive colony. Impeachments were talked of, inquiries proposed, and witnesses summoned.

The Opposition tried all in their power to expose, and the administration all in their power to smother, any thing that could give a colour of justice to the clamour raised against their *employés*.

Mr. Fleming being a large proprietor of India stock, as well as a staunch supporter of the measures of government, was of course deeply interested in the question ; and not only voted both in Leadenhall Street and St. Stephen's, but filled his house by political dinners, given with a view to its discussion, and of course frequented the houses of those who were of the same party with himself.

Among other flaming supporters of chartered rights, and of the propriety of extending our conquests by the force of arms, in short of every thing that could raise the price of India bonds, was Sir Frederick Rupee. The walls of Leadenhall Street resounded to his oratorical powers ; the nabobs, and rajahs, and their armies and their fortresses, were taken and conquered, and their spoils destined to the enrichment of the Company, in the plans laid down by this commercial politician.

He had been in India, and he understood the question. He had amassed a million in the service, and nobody could doubt it.

He, like Mr. Fleming, gave his dinners on

the subject; and digested the legislative question with his mulligatawny,—proposed new campaigns, and praised old ones, with his curry—and drank to the confusion of rajahs, and the accumulation of pagodas, in his East India Madeira.

His plan was to gain proselytes: persons, therefore, of all parties were invited. Ladies added zest to the entertainments; and many were the young proprietors of East India stock who were cajoled out of a promise of their votes on the occasion, before they had made up their minds upon the subject.

At this period of the discussion, when a great quantity of evidence was collecting from all quarters, there arrived from India a celebrated judge, who had gone out very early in life as a barrister; and who, by dint of talent, perseverance, and integrity, had so won his way to opulence and fame, that in process of time he had been made a judge, and for some political service rewarded by the title of Baron Walmer—an unusual compliment to a judge in India.

He had exercised his judicial capacity in the

East now some years; and had devoted much of his time and influence to the amelioration and correction of the corruptions of the government, and in repressing the eagerness of commercial speculation, which, at the same time that it could only be gratified by injustice, he foresaw must in time lead rather to the weakening than to the strengthening of our empire in that part of the world.

In the midst of his legal avocations, he had made himself entirely master of a subject, which he was known to have investigated deeply; and now that ill health and a large fortune induced him to resign his high official situation, and return to seek repose in his own country, his decisions upon the subject were looked up to with anxiety by all parties.

An eye-witness of the acts of government—an acquaintance with the manners, the customs, the rights, the laws, and the inhabitants of the countries in which he had so long been a sojourner—gave the stamp of truth, and claimed attention to any judgment which he had formed.

No wonder, then, at the board of India proprietors, by whom he was visited and invited—that ministerial and opposition members interested in the question courted him in all directions, or that Baron Walmer should be considered a powerful coadjutor to whichever party he should embrace.

But Baron Walmer was a man of no party.—He viewed the great question abstractedly, as it bore upon the first principles of humanity and justice.

He shuddered at the accumulation of wealth and empire at the expense of human life; and yet he felt the necessity of preserving our influence, and the protection of the immense quantity of British capital vested on the faith of the maintenance of our power in that country.

He also felt the danger of permitting other countries to obtain any footing, that might at any future period shake the foundations of our own empire in India.

But he felt all this as a patriot and an Englishman, and not as a merchant.—He felt it as a man, and not as a partisan.—He saw the be-

nefits resulting from English government; and he saw the injustice and the cruelty of English corruption; and he determined to take no part, either in the discussions of Leadenhall Street or in Parliament, that did not tend to the exposure of abuses, the remedying of which he thought the best and surest method of strengthening our establishment in Asia.

His known sense of justice created the respect, and his resplendent talents commanded the admiration, of all parties. So that in all the society in which any discussion of India affairs was interesting—and this was very much so at Mr. Fleming's—the question of what Baron Walmer would say was always a matter of speculation and anxiety.

Little accustomed to feel any interest in the question, Mrs. Fleming, to please her husband, submitted to a great deal of society that was far from agreeable, which this subject introduced to her house; and Mr. Fleming told her it was his intention to get introduced to Baron Walmer the first opportunity, that he might be added to their Oriental *coléries*.

At length cards were received for a dinner at Sir Frederick Rupee's in Portland Place, celebrated for its India discussions, mulligatawny, and Madeira; and Mr. Fleming was delighted at receiving a hint that Baron Walmer had agreed to join the party.

Although from the high character for philanthropy and talent which the world had bestowed upon Walmer Mrs. Fleming felt much interest in his name, yet she would have declined the invitation. But Mr. Fleming was too well aware of her powers of conversation, and of the charms of her society, to go unassisted with such a powerful addition to the temptation which he intended to hold out to the Baron to visit Grosvenor Square, as his wife's manner presented.

In the habit of pleasing him, she stifled the effects of increased indisposition; and repressed those melancholy thoughts which latterly had been almost the constant companions of the hours devoted to society, as well as those devoted to rest and silence.

In spite of her utmost efforts, her imagination

would recur to the earlier scenes of her youthful days; and call up in vivid colours all that she had then felt, and all that she had since suffered.

She anticipated a speedy conclusion to all; and she was already passing her hours in that kind of dreamy existence, which made her frequently forget and neglect the realities of life.

In short, her physical powers were unable to cope much longer with her mental struggles; and she found herself giving way to that kind of morbid sensibility which a long series of unrequited feeling is almost always certain to produce in the human heart. The day for the dinner came; and Mr. Fleming, in his eager anticipation of an introduction to Lord Walmer, exhibited an unusual degree of animation; and having intimated to his lady his wishes that every thing should be done to further an acquaintance with the Baron, retired to make his toilet.

Mrs. Fleming, more than usually melancholy, kept her daughters in her dressing-room till the last moment, and tried to be diverted by

the sprightly sallies of Agnes, as she admired the ornaments with which Mr. Fleming's vanity had filled her dressing-case.

When the carriage was announced, she had some difficulty in separating herself from their embraces, and sighed that she could not devote the whole evening to their caresses.

On arriving in Portland Place, the principal part of the company had assembled, and were as usual dispersed in unconnected groups through the drawing-room, conversing on different subjects, and killing that abominable quarter of an hour, which is in many houses now extended to three-quarters, before dinner.

The ladies were discussing dresses, and the gentlemen politics; but all were in some degree anxious for the arrival of Lord Walmer.

To the India proprietors he was a hero; and the men were accordingly anticipating, in various ways, his sentiments on the subject connected with their interests.

The ladies, however, had different opinions. "Well, I am sure!" cried one belle from amidst a group of young ladies, who seemed rather im-

patient at a delay which prevented exclusive conversation with some favoured swain, who was to give them his arm to the dinner-room,—
“ Well! I’m sure, I’m not so mighty anxious about an old judge.”

“ Oh! but Lord Walmer is not so old.”

“ Aye! but then he is as sensible, and that is as bad, and talks about nothing but India, and pagodas, and Brama, and Bombay; and I hear so much about it all at home, that I declare I am quite tired of the subject.—Besides, I like nobody who is not romantic; and nothing that comes from India can be romantic. Calcutta is certainly the very antipodes to the enchanting regions of romance.”

“ Oh!—But what think you of an Indian chief?—or a Brahmin—or a beautiful widowed bride, sacrificing herself on the funeral pile of a beloved husband!”—asked a young lady with blue eyes, just come out.

“ Oh! that,” returned the other, “ is quite delightful; one might make something of a romance out of such persons and incidents as those;—but then the India Company is quite

a different thing—they try to stop these romantic sacrifices—to extirpate the Brahmins, and to kill the Indian chiefs; or, what is quite as bad, to make them wear coats and *troisièmes*, which must spoil their figures.—But then Pa and the yellow people who dine in Harley Street never mention these romantic things; but talk about the price of tea, and the duty on shawls and Bandanas :—oh! 'tis quite horrid.”

“ Oh, yes! quite horrid—and then Leadenhall Street ;—what can be interesting connected with Leadenhall Street !”

“ Not half so interesting or delightful, certainly, as the idea of a fellow-creature enduring the agonies of death in its most horrid shape, through an absurd superstition,” uttered a grave voice.

“ There now—you are always so satirical, Miss Musters. To be sure, I did not think of their agonies ; which I dare say, as you say, must be very great, considering they are burnt alive. But yet it is a very romantic idea ; and shows great devotion to their husbands, and all that. Only think now, a beautiful creature casting

her eyes up to heaven—then down on the corpse of her deceased love—then mounting the pile, she wraps a Bandana shawl gracefully round her beautiful form, and resigns herself to the devouring flames.”

“ Oh, dear !” exclaimed the blue-eyed young lady—“ I should think the fire would render a shawl unnecessary ; and China srape hangs quite as gracefully.”

“ Oh ! certainly—certainly quite as gracefully—and it would be a pity to burn a beautiful India shawl—they cost so much. But where can this judge, this Lord Walmer be ?—I suppose dinner won’t be announced till he comes ?”

“ I should think not. His presence is anxiously expected ; and I assure you, in spite of your prejudice against those who come from India, you will find him a very interesting person,” said Miss Musters.

“ What isn’t he yellow ?—and hasn’t he got a liver complaint ?”

“ No—he is very pale ; and his wan looks depict a disease of the mind, more than of the body.”

“ Bless me! how interesting! a disease of the heart instead of the liver! I quite long to see him. Have you any idea of what the mental disease is? was he ever in love? perhaps disappointed in some early passion.”

“ Whatever it might have been, he has not been selfish enough to suffer it to interfere with his duty towards his fellow-creatures. he has devoted a series of years to the amelioration of the state of the native Indians, and to the correction of the abuses in that country.”

“ Oh! has he?—well—that is very good, I must say,” drawled out the young lady, half yawning, and turning with some frivolous remark to her young companions.

This conversation had occurred in the hearing of Mrs. Fleming, and she had become unconsciously interested in the person who formed the principal subject of it. A wish arose in her heart to see this Baron Walmer. At this moment she heard his name called out by the servant in the front drawing-room, and it was immediately succeeded by that bustle and subse-

quent silence which always follows the arrival of a distinguished visitor.

Dinner was announced so immediately after the arrival of the Baron, that no introduction could possibly take place; and the party was so numerous, and Mrs. Fleming, who never thought of precedence and etiquette when left to herself, went down stairs so much in the rear, that she never even caught a glimpse of his person.

The bustle attendant upon seating the party, and a recurrence to her own feelings, had banished the temporary curiosity which the previous conversation had excited, and she took her place without a glance in the direction of the upper end of the table, where she might naturally suppose the Baron to be seated.

All the common places of the dinner-table immediately commenced; wines were enumerated and handed—course succeeded course, and the confusion having a little subsided, conversation began to be more distinctly understood.

At this moment a question of considerable importance to the subject which was occu-

pying the minds of most of the gentlemen at table, was put by the person who had handed Mrs. Fleming down to dinner, and who of course sat next to her.

The host immediately requested Baron Walmer to reply, and to give his opinion upon a matter, of which no one could judge so well as himself.

Mrs. Fleming was at this moment engaged in taking wine ; and being in the act of bowing in an opposite direction, was prevented turning towards the speaker, to hear whom, every body was hushed to silence.

The Baron spoke—Mrs. Fleming started : what did she hear ? The voice struck upon her ear—upon her heart :

'twas like the stealing
Of summer wind thro' some wreathed shell ;
Each secret winding—each inmost feeling
Of her whole soul echoed to its spell !

She moved suddenly round ; the Baron's face was turned towards where she was seated ; their eyes met, and in an instant, Augustus Clifton

and Agnes Dornton remembered and recognised each other.

The last time she had heard that voice was in the convulsive sob, in St. James's church. The years that had passed since rolled away from her memory. It seemed as though the church, her mother, her lover, were still present; her head became dizzy; she grasped the cloth with a slight shuddering convulsion; the glass dropped from her trembling hand, and she sank insensible in her chair.

CHAPTER IX.

CONSTANCY.

For, boy, however we may praise ourselves,
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
More longing, wav'ring, sooner lost and won,
Than women's are.

TWO GENT. OF VERONA.

How little do they know of true woman who speak lightly of a woman's love, and yet is it a fashion among poets, and novelists, and essayists, and philosophers, to compare female hearts and affections to any thing that is light, and volatile, and ephemeral in nature! Thus, woman's love has been compared to the evanescent sweetness of

the fast-fading flower, to the inconstancy of the moon, which "monthly changes in her circled orb," to the ever-shifting wind, and, in short, to every thing of which the nature is variable. Impressions made upon their hearts have been successively likened to the letters which the contemplative or the idle have traced in the sand, or to the hubbles and waves created upon the lake by a stone, which subside in a minute or two, and leave the surface as clear, and as bright, and as calm, as ever.

But how little do they know of woman who write and speak of them in this manner! How little do they know the deep and concentrated feeling, the never-ending memory of first impressions, of which a true woman's heart is capable; and how many are there whom we see pursuing and performing all the duties of a wife, who, having married from parental command, have never ceased involuntarily to cherish the fond memory of some early love, which they are supposed to have forgotten, because duty and propriety command that its influence should remain unperceived! How little do we appreciate that

generous burst of feeling which a first love creates in a woman's breast, and which is seldom, if ever, completely forgotten amidst all the subsequent scenes of her life !

A man may have many passions, because his passions are generally the effects of his senses. He is captivated by beauty—he lends himself the willing slave of a feeling which he is in the habit of encouraging, and which he takes every means to cherish and to gratify. He succeeds—the gratification is past—beauty palls upon the senses, and loses its charms by being gazed upon as his own—another complexion, or another form, or another pair of bright eyes, and other flowing tresses, attract his attention—the same feeling is again excited—his senses are again led temporary captives to be again gratified, and disenthralled as before, by gratification. With man, half his passions are caprices. But with woman it is different. Education fences round her heart with the almost impregnable guards which conventional forms of society prescribe. If her heart feel a preference, it is her duty to repress it, unless that preference be

sought by the attentions of another. Her feelings are germs in the bud, which require attention, care, and cultivation, to call into flower; they are blossoms which require the warmth of man's admiration and love to ripen into fruit. A woman's love is therefore seldom excited by temporary or sudden admiration. Her mind is too delicately constructed, for persons to have much to do with the origin of love in her heart; and it is this that makes the love of Desdemona a much more natural passion for a female than that of Juliet.

Passion springs up in a man's heart spontaneously and quickly, like those flowers which we see by the way-side, where accident may have scattered the seed in a light though fertile soil, and lying close to the surface, they blossom, and are blighted by the very sun which called them into existence. But in a woman's heart they require to be sown with a careful hand, and cultivated with kindly attention; but when once they have taken root, the fibres strike downwards; and though the flowers may be blighted by after circumstances, or chilled by

coldness or unkindness, the roots are seldom eradicated. Like the vase in which roses have once been distilled,

You may break, you may ruin the vase, if you will,
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still.

It was thus with Mrs. Fleming. Her early love had been repressed by her principles, and her determination to conquer it had been aided by her high sense of duty and religion. Many were the struggles which she had with her rebellious heart and thoughts in the first years of her marriage. But time and active employment, the grand recipe, and, at length, a mother's duties, gradually lessened the influence and the memory of other days and other hopes; and to a common, or even to an observing eye, Clifton and all the circumstances of their short though delicious intercourse, appeared forgotten.

These feelings still remained at the bottom of her heart, deeply hidden, but still there, and added their influence, unperceived, to the other causes of the disease which was gradually wearing out her fragile frame, and sinking her

to the grave: like the silent and secret working poison of Tophonia, whose use was so common once in Italy, though its progress was imperceptible, its effect was not less fatal.

The generosity of Clifton, by never again appearing before her, saved her many a pang, and materially assisted her in the struggle.

Sometimes, amidst the numerous crowded parties to which she was led, first as a bride, and afterwards as being a part of those duties which Mr. Fleming thought his wife ought to perform, a stray glance might be hastily shot through the company in quest of an object which was not there, and a stray thought would sometimes wonder what had become of him. Perhaps the glance and the thought might create an involuntary feeling of disappointment; but her good sense acknowledged that it was better they should not meet; and she knew Clifton well enough to be certain that it was her he considered in thus withdrawing himself for a time from his usual haunts.

Too conscious to make any inquiries, she was ignorant that he had quitted his country; igno-

rant that having lost her he considered that he had lost every thing, and had withdrawn himself not only from the society in which he had lived, but from his native soil, to try his fortune, and seek a cure for a hopeless passion beneath other suns in distant climes.

Young and inexperienced as it was, Clifton's was no common mind; his heart had not been *usé* by those intrigues into which the youth of the present day plunge so early, and from which too many of them unfortunately form their opinions of the whole female sex.

He had loved with all the vigour of a young and first love. There was none of the namby-pamby ~~sentimentality~~—none of that frittered feeling which so often characterises passion at his age; it was pure, wholesome, manly love, founded on a thorough knowledge of the worth of the object; a love that promised to stand the test of years, and was not to be conquered even by disappointment.

That kind of love which would have guided a woman through all the storms of life; that would have grappled with ill fortune for the

sake of her protection, and have mastered her in the hopes of procuring independence for the object of his affection. Clifton knew that he was loved; he knew that it was through no fickleness that another had been wedded. He was quite aware that her passion for him was as fixed and unchangeable as his own, and that nothing but maternal influence and a high sense of filial duty had made her relinquish him for another.

This, to a common mind, would have been a consolation, for most of us are selfish enough to feel a pleasure in the knowledge of being loved even though the passion can never be gratified.

But it was not so with him; he regretted it because he knew it must add to her present unhappiness, and to the difficulties with which his own heart taught him she would have to struggle ere she could bring her feelings to walk in the path of her present duties. He felt it to be his duty to remove these difficulties as much as lay in his power, and he determined never to see her again.

How few men are there who would have

done this! How many, conscious of being beloved by a beautiful woman who had been thus compelled to marry another, would have fluttered about her—watched for moments when, by signs, or looks, or inuendoes, they might have alluded to the hopes they had lost, and to the times gone by! For there is a selfish pleasure in this retrospection, which few have sufficient firmness of principle and enough strength of mind to forego; and a dangerous pleasure it is, since it has often and often led to consequences which were never in contemplation, when the mind and heart were first permitted to give way to it.

Clifton knew and felt all this; and knew that the best thing for both of them was decided separation. Bereft as he was of its principal joy, he did not meanly and cowardly give up life:—he had lost its sweetness, but its vigour still remained unimpaired. He felt that stir within, which taught him he was not born for an idler on the face of the earth. His love was lost; but fame still remained a bright object in the perspective of existence; and fame he deter-

mined to pursue—not as heretofore, through the flowery and seductive paths of poetry, but through the thorny labyrinth of his profession. Poetry, either to read or to write, at least when it is felt, softens and enervates the heart. Clifton felt it to be dangerous, and he avoided it altogether.

India, at that time, presented a wide field for professional exertion—a mass of cases and actions had accumulated from the extension of territory, and from commercial and territorial disputes of all kinds. The oriental vineyard presented a plentiful harvest, and there were but few labourers to divide the toil and the profits.

With some little difficulty an appointment was procured; and without the dangerous indulgence of seeing her even once again, Clifton quitted the object of his first love and of his dearest hopes, to struggle with his disappointed feelings, and to seek for power and fortune in a distant country. He lost not an instant in preparation, but quitted London, and joined his ship that was waiting in the Downs for passengers. The hurry and bustle of departure occu-

pied his mind; and the first moment of silent reflection was that in which he found himself on the deck—and felt the motion of the vessel that rode proudly over the waves to fetch the produce of the East, to pour into the lap of rich and industrious England; and as he saw the sails unfurled, and watched the *fast* receding shore, he became almost careless of his fate, and could have exclaimed with our favourite living lyric:

Sail on, sail on, thou fearless bark—
Wherever blows the welcome wind,
It cannot lead to scenes more dark,
More sad than those I leave behind.
Sail on, sail on, through endless space—
Through calm—through tempest—stop no more;
The stormiest sea's a resting-place
To him who leaves a heart on shore.

For a moment he gave himself up to the bitterness of his feelings—for a moment dissolved into all the softness of sorrow. He soon, however, recollected how useless it was thus to give way to sentiments that ought to be buried in oblivion: he roused himself into energy—cast one last and lingering look at the receding

shores of his native land, and breathing a fervent prayer for the happiness of Agnes, as they seemed to melt in the horizon and mingle in the distance, he turned with a determined though despairing heart, to the contemplation of a scene which it is ever the pride of a Briton to behold—the active energy of a ship's crew, and that admirable discipline of a number of tempestuous and warlike spirits, which has tended more to the high character of the British navy, than the stout oak of which its vessels are constructed.

There is something exhilarating in the activity and cheerfulness of British seamen as they climb the yards, unfurl the sails, and perform with dexterity all those evolutions which give to man almost the mastership of the winds and waves—something inspiring in the hearty cheering, and vigorous yee—yee, that echoes as the various ropes are hauled into their proper places; and as the white sails spread their swelling bosoms to the winds, and bear the vessel proudly on through the blue waters.

Clifton felt it—it roused his sinking heart to

energy: he contemplated the power of man; and as he observed that it controlled even the winds and waves, he determined that it should also control and direct the feelings and passions of his own heart.

A long monotonous voyage was, however, a dangerous trial: the want of variety in external objects is too apt to throw the heart and mind back upon the resources of memory for occupation; and the contemplation of the vast solitude of the deep, in which the single vessel that floated him on its surface seemed but as an atom, was rather calculated to encourage than to repress the feelings of Clifton.

A determined mind can, however, accomplish any thing that it undertakes with energy: he knew that employment was the grand panacea; and Clifton devoted himself to the study of his profession, and to the attainment of all kinds of knowledge connected with the country to which he was going. These pursuits, together with the conversation of the intelligent officers of the Indiaman in which he had taken his passage, occupied his time, if not his heart, and

left him little room for reflection on past circumstances.

Sometimes in the silence of the night, as he watched the rapid waters rolling beneath him, he gave a solitary thought to past times. The name of Agnes would appear to his imagination, written in the ~~dark~~ blue wave that rolled so rapidly beneath him, or among the stars which shone so brilliantly and passively in the clear blue sky above him:—her beauties, her softness, the recollection of the first hours of their love, would then steal into his mind: his heart would melt as memory poured forth her store of scenes and circumstances connected with his disappointment—tears would rush into his eyes—he would forget himself, and for a moment give way to fancies of what might have been, and resign himself to a dreamy existence, from which he would suddenly rouse his mind—address a silent prayer for strength to resist the softening influence of these recollections, and betake himself to the severe studies of his profession.

Several times during the influence of these

thoughts was he tempted to write : he could not bear that Agnes should think him totally forgetful—totally regardless of all that he and she had felt. But the sense that this would be a selfish gratification without any good, and the just knowledge that he had obtained of her leading him truly to suppose that she would estimate his feelings by her own, restrained him ; and by the time of his arrival in India, her image was registered among the recollections of those whom he was only to think of as being in heaven.

On his arrival, he found plenty of occupation in his professional capacity ; and the number of abuses which presented themselves for reformation, the number of injustices which it was in his power to remedy, ever gave him the best balm of a wounded mind—constant occupation.

At the period of his arrival, there was a great opening for an independent and upright advocate—and this Clifton was : the consequence was, his employment by all parties, and the

subsequent confidence of the administration which intrusted to his judgment many of the most important regulations for the government of the new provinces : in all of which, Clifton so managed as to beget confidence between the conquered and the conquerors.

These employments rapidly led to a fortune and a rank as highly honourable to himself as it was to the government that employed him.

At length a question of great political importance arising with regard to our possessions in the East, it became his duty, as possessing the best and most elaborate information on the subject, to come to England ; and though his heart ached at the necessity, yet Clifton was not a man who neglected ~~even~~ a painful duty for the gratification of his own private feelings.

The banished and pennyless Clifton, therefore, after a lapse of fifteen years, returned to England the rich, the respected, and the talented Baron Walmer.

The sight of his native country recalled all

the circumstances of his youth :—again the form of Agnes flitted before his eyes. But his feelings had too long been too well regulated to permit the slightest tinge of passion to characterise these recollections.

CHAPTER X.

THE FUNERAL.

Such hearts as theirs were never pair'd above
Ill-suited to each other : join'd, not match'd ;
Some sullen influence, a foe to both,
Wrought up the fatal marriage.

Rowe

EVERY thing had been prepared for the splendid fete at Mr. Fleming's, which he trusted was to identify him as the head of the party in Oriental politics. Nothing that his immense wealth could procure in the way of luxury and of costliness, had been omitted ; and all those who go into society with no other views than those of killing time, or seeking entertainment,

were looking forward with gay anticipations to the evening fixed for this splendid ball, which they were aware would be rendered one of the most brilliant of the season, by the taste of the hostess, and by the vanity of the host.

Poor Mrs. Fleming, acting upon the habitual impulse of her life, that of repairing the involuntary fault of not loving her husband, by the minutest attention to his wishes, had herself given directions to the various artificers who had been employed in the new furniture, and in the splendid temporary decorations which were everywhere scattered about the apartments. These works were proceeding with the utmost rapidity, even when their directress was brought into the house, after the death-blow had been given; and as she was borne to the bed in which in so few hours she was to be a corpse, her fading eye fell upon nothing but all these elegant trappings of vanity—these splendid preparations for festivity.

How changed the scene!—there were now no clattering of hammers, no officious bustling of servants hurrying to and fro with the appurtenances

of a banquet—no busy upholsterers with damask hangings and silk draperies: all these were stopped, and were succeeded by those silent ones which prepare the dead for their last habitation.

Yet lovely and amiable as she was, Mrs. Fleming was no doubt much more regretted by the “numerous and fashionable circle” whose names graced her visiting list, because she died before her fête, than she would have been had she lived till after it.

“It was really a pity,” exclaimed some, “that the preparations had proceeded so far.” Others looked over their cards to select which party they should substitute for the supper rendezvous, on the evening on which they had promised themselves such a splendid entertainment at the Flemings’.

“Poor Mrs. Fleming!” was uttered by many a gay pair of lips; and the giddy utterers of the exclamation hurried on in the same career of endless vanity and folly: nor did one of them think of applying the case of Mrs. Fleming to herself.

Not one of them exclaimed inwardly, "So one day will it be with me;" not one of them considered that at some period or other, these would be the only sounds of sympathy with which the news of their own death would be received.

How it is that death makes so little impression, is one of the most unaccountable, and perhaps one of the wisest circumstances in human nature. For no poet ever wrote a truer line than Young, when he said,

All men think all men mortal but themselves—

There seems to be an intuitive idea in every individual, that the world could not go on without them; and it never occurs to them that their death, even in their own circle, will make no more void than a stone cast into a lake. A few bubbles may be seen rising on its surface; but they are dispersed by the next breath which passes over them, and all is smooth again, and the waters roll on as before.

Death had stepped in to stop the gaieties of Mr. Fleming's house, like the spectre of Alonzo

the Brave, and had carried off the mistress of the feast.

There is something peculiarly solemn in death when it seems thus to shake hands with pleasure; when it thus intrudes amidst the lighter and more frivolous pursuits of our lives; when it cuts us off in the midst of vanity and folly, rather than in the performance of our duty, and without giving time for preparation; when it thus almost strides into the ball-room, turning the lights blue, the sounds of mirth into mourning, and hurrying some thoughtless victim at once from the drawing-room to the grave.

It is true, Mrs. Fleming was not one of the giddy, thoughtless flutterers of fashion, who had sacrificed every thing to its influence. She had been a deep and silent sufferer, and her sufferings had made her turn her thoughts inward, and the insufficiency of the pleasures of her existence to fill her heart, had made her in some degree feel the necessity of looking for felicity somewhere besides this world.

Yet in the midst of her husband's pursuits, a great portion of worldliness, not in a sordid

view, clung to her mind, and her intense affection for her children attached her to a life, from which she certainly was not prepared to part so suddenly.

The master-cord of that curious instrument, the human heart, had been struck too strongly, and it broke with the strength of the vibration.

Yet, as far as the strict performance of her duties to her husband and children—as far as a virtuous life free from a spot or blemish—and as far as an untarnished reputation and a boundless and overflowing charity could assist her, Mrs. Fleming was better prepared than most of us for an event of so much import, and coming so suddenly. But it is too difficult a task in the midst of life, and health, and spirits, and enjoyment, to live as though we were in the midst of death.

The principle of life seems to be to drive away the reflection that there is an end of it; and if this idea will sometimes force itself upon us as the companion of some mental or corporeal pang, returning health, or some new vanity, soon drives it from our remembrance. Men in

a field of battle, when the chances are rather in their favour than otherwise, and where their death is not absolute destiny, never see their companions in arms dropping around them without expecting their own fate in the next bullet.

How is it then in general life, where we know that death is our inevitable fate, that we can see and hear of it in all directions, and by a thousand means, that we follow one to the grave—read the epitaph of another—and can scarcely pass through a street without the melancholy memoranda of hatchments or closed shutters, that we never think, of ourselves—never think that our own turn may be next?

The glittering chandeliers, the splendid drape and artificial flowers, and all the gay et-ceteras of preparation, formed but a melancholy contrast with the sable trappings of the chamber of death.

Alas! how little thought Mrs. Fleming the morning before, when she had expressed a fear that the flowers which were every where scattered through the apartments and verandas,

would not live through the heat of the atmosphere on the night of her party, that she herself would be an earlier victim than they ; that she herself would drop into the grave before the freshness of their transient blossoms had passed away.

The blooming orange-tree, the bright carnation, the crimson rose, seemed to rise in mockery at the frailer tenure by which mortality held its life and freshness. For they still shed their sweets, and spread their bright blossoms in the air, while the hand that had reared and cultivated them lay cold and senseless.

All the servants moved about the house with noiseless tread ; all the formula of grief was strictly preserved. Gillow had received a *carte blanche* to do every thing that was proper according to the rank of the deceased ; every thing was hushed and silent from the library, in which Mr. Fleming and Lady Pomeroy sat in a kind of state grief, down to the steward's room and servants'-hall.

The customary suit of solemn black was ordered for all the household, and the silence was

only disturbed by the muffled knocks which announced the numerous cards of condolence that poured in upon the widower and Lady Pomeroy.

Such were the outward symptoms of "funereal woe" for the departed Mrs. Fleming; yet, although she had been a most exemplary wife, a kind mistress, and a sincere friend, the only real distress evinced for her loss was exhibited in the nursery, where the little Agnes was literally overwhelmed with her grief.

The floods of tears that rolled down her cheeks—her convulsed sobs—her utter incapacity to attend to any of the common consolations offered by her maid, or by the governess, who, under Mrs. Fleming's direction superintended the studies of her children; all showed, that young as she was, she had still years sufficient to appreciate the loss of a mother—a mother who had been her resource in all her little difficulties, upon whose bosom she had a thousand times been hushed to repose, when chidden by her father and Lady Pomeroy.

Poor Agnes! great as was her childish grief, as great as her little heart was capable of ex-

perienicing ; yet, how little could her infant mind appreciate the measure and extent of her loss, or its influence on all her future life !

Amelia suffered too—but she suffered in character ; a few silent tears stole down her quiet cheeks ; but she seemed to feel the argument of the maid, that too much weeping would make her eyes red, and she therefore checked her tears, but kept up a silence appropriate to the melancholy circumstance, and responded sigh for sigh with Lady Pomeroy on her occasional visit to their room.

This lady almost chid Agnes for the violence of her grief ; but finding that she only rendered it still more violent, she retired, lest the sight of her tears and sound of her sobs should discompose her nerves, and render her incapable of administering consolation to her brother ; her own was derived from receiving the cards of condolence, and giving all the necessary orders for the funeral, which Mr. Fleming determined should be as splendid as the rank of her ancestors and his own wealth authorised.

It was some consolation to him also, to read

the paragraphs in the various papers in which his deceased wife's progenitors were named.

The leading foible of his soul was gratified, in spite of his loss, by reading, that—"On this morning early, the much-admired and universally respected Mrs. Fleming, died suddenly at the family mansion in Grosvenor Square. Her death is universally regretted by the world of fashion, in whose hemisphere she shone one of the most brilliant stars. Mrs. Fleming was grand-daughter of the Marquis of T——, by the mother's side, and of the Earl of D——, by the father's. She was first cousin to the late Duke of B——, and niece to the Countess of T——, the Marchioness of W——, and the Dowager Duchess of B——; and was connected by blood or by marriage with most of the noble families in the country. The immediate cause of her death was the bursting of a blood vessel, in consequence of a fit of coughing after the splendid banquet given yesterday by Sir Frederick Rupee. Mr. Fleming and family are inconsolable."

This was the account which gratified Mr.

Fleming in the columns of the *Morning Post*, and other polite papers, all of which attributed her death to the same circumstance—the bursting of a blood-vessel: it was indeed the bursting of the greatest—the heart!!

But who could imagine that the gay—the envied—the rich Mrs. Fleming, with every luxury at command—one of the leaders of fashion—one moving in the gayest circles of the metropolis—rolling over the streets in splendid equipages—and basking in the sunshine of prosperity—could die of a broken heart?—and yet it was true!

A broken heart is not one of the acknowledged diseases of our nature; it is never mentioned in the annual bills of mortality; and yet it is a much more common cause of death than we are aware of.

How many neglected parents and wives—how many struggling through disappointment after disappointment, and hope blighted after hope, till nothing remains desirable in life, thus yield it up with a broken heart, while their death is

attributed to consumption, or some of the legitimate and admitted causes of death.

The routine of Mr. Fleming's family went on as usual; dinners were served in the dining-room, steward's-room and servants'-hall; for the great machine of life must go on in its accustomed course. No mortality short of a general plague arrests its customary progress.

The event was not yet so generally known, but that there came several tickets for balls, and cards for dinners, to the deceased.

At night the inmates of the house retired early: there was a melancholy cessation from their usually dissipated hours.

A person was appointed to sit up in the next room with the corpse; and she as well as the rest of the household were soon buried in sleep.

All slept but Agnes: she still sobbed, and could not compose her grief: she however was put to bed, and buried her little face and weeping eyes in the pillow, still calling upon her

Unable to sleep, she sat up, and finding that

her sister and their maid slept soundly, she stole out of bed, and creeping along the private passage which communicated with her mother's apartment, through which Mrs. Fleming always visited her children night and morning, and derived in their society the principal consolation of her life, she entered the chamber of death.

The sight of the pallid corpse as it reposed on the bed merely covered with a sheet—the marble arms extended—and the placid face, looking much more tranquil than it was wont to look in life ; the tapers that burnt at the foot of the couch—the black trappings which were hung around, occasioned a fresh burst of grief from the agonised heart of the poor girl, and throwing herself on the bed, she clasped the corpse in her arms, and gave way to the bitterness of her agony. The grief of childhood, however, is not like that of maturer years. The agony which can give way to tears is much sooner relieved than that dry concentrated grief of the heart, which finds no vent but in the sighs that threaten to break it. So Agnes soon sobbed herself to

sleep on that cold bosom of her dead parent, from which she had first drawn the warm stream of her own existence, and on which so many of her infant troubles had been hushed to repose.

How long she had slept, Agnes was insensible; but on awaking, she perceived with terror, a tall figure dressed in black, bending over the couch of death; his look was benign, however, though solemn, and the warm tear of manly grief stood in his eye, as he hushed her to silence, and still gazed intently on the corpse.

His cloak was thrown back; the light of the tapers shone on his pale features, whose manly beauty had not been displaced, but merely changed in character by his grief; his uplifted hands were clasped, and his lip seemed to move in silent prayers either for the grief of the living, or for the fate of the departed.

Agnes would have screamed, but the touching solemnity of his countenance, the evident participation of her grief, and the pitying kindness of his look, took from her all fear, and she raised up her rosy, healthy cheek, still wet with her tears, from the pale breast upon which it

had been pillowed, and with which it formed the perfect contrast of the living and the dead; and gazed on the stranger with wonder, not unmixed with awe.

As the tears rolled down the stranger's pale face, her own flowed afresh; and she permitted him, without shrinking, to take her from the corpse of her mother, to peruse her countenance, and to utter a solemn benediction over her, while he made an audible vow never to forsake the child of a mother who had been so dear to him.

He pressed the child to his breast, imprinted one kiss on her forehead, placed her again upon the couch, cast one more mournful and almost agonised glance upon the corpse, and quitted the apartment; leaving the youthful Agnes almost uncertain whether she had seen a spirit or a human being. But she had gazed so intently upon the form and features of the stranger, that she felt she should never forget them.

In the morning Agnes was found by the attendants asleep by the side of her mother's

corpse; and her tale of the stranger was received by her chiding aunt and father as the effect of a dream, caused by the exciting circumstances under which she was placed.

The house was now given up to the undertakers; a leaden coffin cased in mahogany, and covered with crimson velvet, decorated with escutcheons, in which the arms furnished Mr. Fleming, by the flattery of the Herald's-office, were blended with the more ancient and honourable shield of the Dorntons.

To all these minutæ Mr. Fleming attended with peculiar care, as though he feared the gloomy tenants of the tomb might not be aware of the rank and pretensions of the deceased.

Nothing was omitted that could bespeak these, and make them felt and acknowledged by all who witnessed the formulæ of death.

At length the mournful morning appointed for the funeral arrived, and was ushered in by the tolling of the bells in the vicinity—a noiseless bustle pervaded the mansion—carriages began to arrive from all the fashionable quarters of the town, as empty as the grief of their owners

for the deceased ; and Mr. Fleming felt gratified, as he witnessed from his drawing-room window the long line of coronetted vehicles which were in waiting to fill up the procession that was to convey his highly connected consort to the tomb ; for even in this solemn moment, the ruling passion of his heart was paramount.

At eleven o'clock the hearse with its six black steeds and nodding plumes, all blazoned with the family escutcheons, drew up to the door which had lately echoed to the thundering knock of the visitants to her who was now to be borne away from it for ever.

The unruly mob burst through the officers who attended to keep the line, that they might gratify their curiosity by a sight of the splendid coffin, which was borne to the hearse by four of Mr. Fleming's footmen in deep mourning, assisted by two of the undertakers ; as the hearse moved slowly on, with plumes before and behind, and black clothed attendants on each side, followed by all the paraphernalia of funereal pomp, the coaches slowly took up those invited

to the funeral : the long line of carriages closed the procession.

On their arrival at the church, the pall was borne by four people of rank. Mr. Fleming walked as chief mourner : the funeral service was performed by a bishop ; and nothing that could render the *form* impressive was omitted.

Chittenden had outdone himself ; and Mr. Fleming was satisfied, and paid the bill of the funeral expenses, as the last honours paid to his wife's memory and his own pride.

Amidst the pomp and ceremony on this mournful occasion, there was one apart from the crowd, who groaned aloud during the ceremony, and who eagerly stretched forth his head to catch a last glimpse of the coffin as it descended by machinery into the vault. He was not an invited mourner ; neither did he come with the common herd of spectators. From the moment the church doors were open, he had taken his place in a retired spot, and had been observed by the pew-openers in earnest and constant prayer till the arrival of the funeral

procession, when he had joined the mourners unobserved, and stood at no great distance from the coffin during the ceremony.

The same stranger, by dint of a bribe to the sexton, obtained the sad privilege of spending nearly two hours during the subsequent night in the vault, where he was overheard to pray most earnestly, and to indulge in almost ungovernable grief.

A carriage and four waited for him at the gates of the church-yard, which bore from England—from his prospects, his duties, and his home—the Baron Walmer; whose heart was the only one impressed with *feeling* during the glittering and mournful *forms* of the funeral pageantry.

As for Mr. Fleming, habit more than affection was violated by the death of his wife; and he found his chief consolation in the pride which such a numerous attendance of persons of fashion and consequence and of their carriages had gratified; and he immediately gave unlimited orders to a sculptor of eminence to prepare

a monument to the memory of Mrs. Fleming.

But

Can storied urn or animated bust,

Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath ?

Can honour's voice provoke the silent dust,

Or flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death ?

CHAPTER XI.

THE GOVERNESS.^d

In short, in all things she was fairly what I call
A prodigy—her morning dress was dimity,
Her evening, silk ; or in the summer, muslin,
And other stuffs, with which I won't stay puzzling.

SOME few months subsequent to the funeral of Mrs. Fleming, as Lady Pomeroy and her brother were seated after a *tête-a-tête* dinner, in which there had been quite as much ceremony towards each other, as there could have been if they had been dining in state, the future education of his daughters became the subject of Mr. Fleming's thought and conversation.

A number of plans had been proposed, for nothing took place in Mr. Fleming's establishment without due deliberation, and the most trivial occurrence was always canvassed with a gravity worthy of more important matter, so that every thing might be done with propriety and *selon les regles*—which was a favourite phrase of Mr. Fleming's, and comprehended the whole ideas he entertained of virtue as well as propriety.

After a silence of some minutes, in which Mr. Fleming appeared to be digesting some important thought with his last slice of pineapple—he exclaimed, “You are right, my dear Lady Pomeroy, something must be resolved on with regard to the Miss Flemings; their education, as you say, must not be neglected—they are yet unformed and unfinished, particularly Agnes, whom I almost despair of seeing so accomplished as her sister Amelia promises to be.”

“Oh! never fear,” said Lady Pomeroy; “Agnes has certainly some of the prejudices of nature very strongly impressed upon her mind—

the late Mrs. Fleming,"—this was uttered with a sigh, which was responded from the lips of the widower,—“you must be aware was herself rather absurdly—excuse the word—prejudiced in favour of nature. She had great ideas of the impulses of the heart, and rather encouraged the tendencies of Agnes to feeling and sentiment, which have really nothing to do with the education of a modern young lady; and which would certainly be great stumbling-blocks and impediments to their forming establishments in genteel society.”

“True, my dear sister; my late wife,”—another sigh—“certainly had erroneous opinions upon this subject. She had always an idea that education had quite as much to do with the heart as with the head. She thought that nature could do without the aid of art—an hypothesis which the experience of every day’s observation convinces us to be false.”

“Right, brother; for do you imagine that the Misses Starling would ever have made the matches they have done, with all their beauty, but for the fashionable education they have re-

ceived? would the eldest ever have created the sensation which she always did in society by her singing, if she had been left to warble like a nightingale untaught by Crevelli or Liverati? or would the second have secured her baronet, but for the grace with which she entered a drawing-room, and danced a quadrille? No—no—my poor sister-in-law was wrong certainly, for in these times every thing is owing to the dancing and singing master. Manner makes its way much more than nature—accomplishments and notoriety procure husbands—and what other end can one wish in the education of young women; or, in fact, what other end is there to be attained?”

“Right, sister; but you are aware that my poor wife had a great idea of being herself the directress of her daughters’ minds. She thought where so much natural talent was displayed as in Agnes, that nature only wanted to be regulated; and that all that was necessary to be done, was to give a right direction to her thoughts and feelings. I felt her notions to be Utopian; but I was willing to let her proceed

in her system, until she herself should discover it to be erroneous; luckily for Amelia, she has been more under your care, and I certainly perceive the difference."

Lady Pomeroy bowed to the compliment, exclaiming, "Oh! certainly, every thing depended upon education; and with your permission, brother," said she, "as I shall certainly divide my fortune between them and my son, if they form establishments to please me—I will look out for a proper person to undertake so important a charge, as I feel the education of the nieces of Lady Pomeroy and the daughters of Mr. Fleming to be. For well educated they must and shall be:—I do not want them to talk about experiments, and retorts, and chemical concerns, as the Miss Deepdeans do—all of whom will no doubt marry professors of some nonsense or another with their natural philosophy:—neither do I wish them to be Blue, like the Miss Whites, whose learning and wit frighten the men, as well it may—for what have young women to do with wit? But I would give them

the best education;—and the best education I consider to consist, in those attainments which carry young ladies with propriety in fashionable circles, in dancing, in singing, in the absence of *mauvaise honte*, and in a proper appreciation of themselves and their station in society.”

“Quite right; and how shall we attain this object, my dear sister?”

“Why,” replied Lady Pomeroy, “I have been consulting my friends, and have my eye on a young person, whom I think peculiarly adapted for our purpose. She is the most accomplished governess, Lady Betty Vincent says, that she has ever met with. Her attitude at the harp, her execution and style at the piano-forte, and her manners altogether, are those of a perfect woman of fashion. Her last pupils, the Ladies Mary and Sophia Darnley, are both married, and well married; and this I think the most decided recommendation that Miss Wheeler possesses: and were we to have such a person now, she would give the finishing touch to Amelia at the harp, and most likely

reduce the exuberant spirits of Agnes within the bounds of fashionable decorum, and counteract her tendencies to follow the bent of her natural inclinations. In short, I think that, with the assistance of such a lady as Miss Wheeler, my nieces might be rendered fit to come out in a very few years."

These were convincing arguments; and it was therefore determined that a note should be immediately despatched to Lady Betty, to request her influence with Miss Wheeler to superintend the education of the Miss Flemings: for Miss Wheeler never having as yet condescended to teach any "ideas to shoot" but those of the young noblesse, it was considered politic to secure the interest of Lady Betty to induce her to accept the situation.

"Besides," said Lady Pomeroy, "it will give the girls eclat, to have the same governess as the Ladies Darnley; the one of whom is a marchioness; and the other will be a countess, on the death of her husband's father, the old Earl, which is daily expected."

This was enough to determine Mr. Fleming

to do every thing in his power to secure so desirable an acquisition. The note was immediately despatched—Lady Betty was most fortunately at home, and Miss Wheeler most fortunately with her; and it was accordingly answered by a little perfumed billet on saffron-coloured paper, expressive of her intention to wait upon Lady Pomeroy in the morning.

About two o'clock the next day, Miss Wheeler was ushered into Mr. Fleming's drawing-room, where she was received by him and his sister. He was himself surprised at the decided air of fashion which characterised her person and appearance; and could scarcely imagine, in the splendidly dressed lady before him, that he saw one who was about to become a dependant in his family.

The business of the interview was soon entered into. The present state of the young ladies' education was explained; and Miss Wheeler spoke volubly, and eloquently, and critically, upon all the points of modern etiquette, upon music, dancing, and the other

necessary accomplishments, and upon what she called the "*morale* of manner."

She quoted at length many of the sentiments, of modern writers upon the subject; and above all, she cited the opinions of the Marchioness of this, and the Countess of that, and her dear friends, Ladies so and so, till both Mr. Fleming and Lady Pomeroy were delighted, and expressed their gratitude to Lady Betty for her recommendation.

With these sentiments, the terms of Miss Wheeler's condescension to become an inmate of Mr. Fleming's were soon arranged—a carriage at her command—whole and sole control over her pupils—a place at Mr. Fleming's table on all occasions—a sitting-room to see her own society in, and the employment of such masters as she herself should choose, were things of course acceded to; and after having been introduced to her pupils, Miss Wheeler took her leave, to prepare herself to take up her abode with them, to the great delight of Mr. Fleming and Lady Pomeroy, who spent an hour in

enumerating the advantages of such a governess to Amelia and Agnes.

In the course of a week, the new governess was regularly installed in her new situation, and by the leers and observations of Lady Betty Vincent's coachman and footman, who accompanied the carriage which set her down at Mr. Fleming's door, they were quite as much delighted to get rid of as he was to receive her.

Miss Wheeler was, in reality, about seven-and-twenty; but by the style of her dress, aided by certain little operations of art on the cheeks and eyebrows, and a very judicious disposition of the hair, she did not appear more than one or two and twenty, to which she owned. Without being regularly beautiful, she had points about her features and figure which rendered her a very attractive person. Large dark eyes, of whose power she was perfectly aware, and whose natural fierceness she had schooled into languishing glances; jet black hair, hanging in glossy ringlets over her forehead, so as to hide

the height of her too prominent cheek-bones ; a mouth, the corners of which Lavater would have said bespoke ill-temper, but that the lips were extended into a perpetual smile, to show a fine set of teeth ; were the principal characteristics of her face ; while her figure to all appearance was perfect symmetry, though rather upon a large scale.

The art of dressing to advantage she had studied critically ; and appeared to know the defects of her own person, only that she might be able to conceal them the more effectually. She knew the precise effects of every kind of costume, and she had studied them all with a critical nicety—from the voluptuous undress wrapper in the morning, which displays by concealing beauties, to the splendid costume of the evening, when female charms are allowed to appear in their full dress.

The expression of attitude had been another of her favourite and successful studies : no one knew better than herself how to sweep a well-turned arm and white hand over the strings of a harp—how to throw up her eyes from the

piano to the ceiling with an air of enthusiasm—how to dispose her limbs more attractively on the elegant luxuriance of a sofa, or with more playfulness on the more lowly ottoman.

All women, if they consider their beauty at all, consider it with regard to the admiration it excites from the other sex, and the envy it creates in their own; but few knew so well as Miss Wheeler the ideas of men upon this interesting subject; a professed courtesan could not have studied their inclinations more closely; and by this means, there was not a point of her beauty or conduct that did not speak to the senses of those whose admiration she wished to attract.

Yet all this intimate knowledge of effect she could conceal under the semblance of elegant simplicity and fashionable carelessness; though in the midst of it, a nice observer might perceive the lynx eye with which she watched the success of her manoeuvres.

Such was the governess provided for Amelia and Agnes; and no sooner was she installed in

her situation, than the education of the young ladies commenced. Miss Wheeler, as far as education went, merely looked upon them as raw material, which she was to convert into any form her fancy might suggest. Accomplishment was the order of the day—display the great end to be attained: the voice, therefore, was an object of more consequence than the heart—the grace of the person of far greater importance than the cultivation of the mind.—The latter, Miss Wheeler deemed nearly useless; since she possessed the art of communicating to her pupils an “air of intelligence,” which, in many instances, answered the purpose of intelligence itself.—And who, at one or other period of their lives, has not been deceived by this appearance?—who has not imagined an eye cast up enthusiastically to the ceiling, or fixed abstractedly on the fire, the indication of an intellectual mind?—who has not taken the earnest gaze exhibited on the occasion of interesting conversation, for the effect of an inquiring disposition?—and who has not been deceived into an idea that a subject has been perfectly under-

stood, and sensible conversation properly appreciated, by a nod, and a smile, and a look, which, being interpreted, seemed to say—"Just as I thought!"

Of all these little arts Miss Wheeler was a perfect mistress, as well as of all the accomplishments of display. Her execution at the harp and piano were unrivalled—her dancing the admiration of every body; and she spoke French and Italian with the volubility, if not the precision, of a native.

But she taught none of these accomplishments herself—her province and her engagement were, to superintend only: Mr. Fleming's house was, therefore, immediately inundated by foreigners, under the various denominations of professors of the harp, professors of the piano, professors of drawing, and professors of French and Italian. The only Englishman admitted to participate in the honour of "forming" the Miss Flemings, was an Ex-adjutant of the Grenadier Guards, whose province it was to see that the march of feet kept pace with the "march of mind;" and whom Miss Wheeler introduced

as a professor of calisthenics, which, being interpreted, means the manual exercise of a woman.

Curtsey-frames, backboards, inclined planes, balance-poles, and all the *et-ceteræ* of female gymnastics, were likewise put in requisition, that the "muscles of the pupils might be sufficiently developed," and all the feminine exercises accomplished, from the "simple pace walking" to the "simple pace jumping:" through all the system of "forward and backward pace in place;" "skipping and touching behind;" "crossing legs in place;" "zigzag step walking and jumping," up to the "high step," and the "high step complicated:"¹ in short, the whole science of female exercises, as developed in the ingenious essay of Signor Voarino on Calisthenics; which said essay as "accompanied by illustrative figures," was understood, by Miss Wheeler, from the tip of her toe to the tips of her fingers; and, as she remarked the elastic forms and movements of

¹ The printed names given to the different exercises.

her new pupils: she told Lady Pomeroy, she had no doubt that, by the proper adaptation of the system, they would in time reach the acme of Calisthenic perfection, and perform "the *high step, double step, zigzag step, and the galloping pace, running the same circle, and using the same means as in the flying round.*"¹

As Lady Pomeroy herself wondered at some of the articles which she saw placed in the school-room, and, fashionable as she was, had never heard of "Calisthenics," her anxiety was excited; and she condescended to betray her ignorance of this novel branch of education, which Miss Wheeler explained to her by repeating one or two of the exercises, and illustrating them in her own person.

Some little old-fashioned notions of female propriety and delicacy which Lady Pomeroy retained, from having been educated so many years ago, were rather shocked, when she heard Miss Wheeler expatiate on the necessity of her nieces "executing with facility and by principle

¹ Vide a Treatise on Calisthenic Exercises, arranged for the private tuition of Ladies, by Signor Voarino, p. 64.

the movements necessary to develop the muscles of the superior extremities ;” and when she read to her some of the exercises, in which, at the word of command, they were to “ keep the left leg in its place and the knee stretched ;” then, “ by means of a jump, the left leg was to be brought forward and the right backward, performing the same movements with the left leg, and repeating them several times by means of the jump, changing the leg and arm each time.”¹ As Miss Wheeler proceeded, Lady Pomeroy’s eyes opened almost into a stare ; but when, in the third exercise, she heard the word of command given, to “ raise the right leg extended forward as high as possible, the instep stretched, the upper part of the body held back till it is set down, raising at the same time the left leg ;” and in the fifth, where, at the word of “ cross legs,” the pupil is ordered “ to cross the right leg over the left, the hip stretched ;” &c. ; and in the complicated exercises, where the “ knee is directed to be raised as high as the hip,”² even all her respect for and admiration

¹ Vide *Treatise on Calisthenic Exercises*.

² *Ibid.*

of Miss Wheeler could not prevent the expression of Lady Pomeroy's surprise, at this modern method of education.'—To which Miss Wheeler, with her usual volubility, replied—

“ Oh dear ! no, ma'am ; not modern at all.—Calisthenics were in great vogue among the ancients, quite the *ton* in Athens, and the rage in Sparta :—the body as well as the mind requires to be educated for health and elegance, from the intimate connexion of one with the other. Herodicus, ma'am, himself the great instructor of the great physician Hippocrates, was master of one of the Grecian Palæstric, or Gymnasia ; and frequently remarked, that the young ladies under his tuition were among the most fashionable and elegant of his time—leading off the balls, and bearing the belle every where : which is just the case with the Ladies Darnley, Lady Maria Compton, the Marchioness of Desborough, the young Duchess of Dashly, and a variety of other ladies of

¹ The whole of these exercises are copied *VERBATIM* from Signor Vuarino's Treatise arranged for the private tuition of ladies.

ton, who are devoted to the elegances of Calisthenics, and perform the evolution of "flying round to perfection."

These names had much more influence with Lady Pomeroy than that of Herodicus.—So Miss Wheeler was permitted to take her course, and every thing gave note of preparation for completely finishing the young ladies.

When Amelia and Agnes first entered their study, after all the apparatus of education had been collected together, Agnes took that kind of survey of all the before-mentioned articles, with much the same look as an inquiring spectator would contemplate the instruments of torture in the prisons of the Inquisition.

"What is this for?"

"To teach you to curtsy gracefully."

"To teach me to curtsy! why I can curtsy without that. There, ma'am—won't that do?—And this?"

"To teach you to hold your head up."

"Oh I can hold my head up high enough,"—at the same time placing herself as erect as her little form would permit. And thus Agnes ran

over every article in the room, protesting she could do every thing in which they were to aid her, quite as well without their assistance. Amelia, on the contrary, put her feet in the stocks, submitted her shoulders to the back-board, and curtsied in the frame screwed up to the last hole, as gravely and seriously as though it were the most important business of her life.

Agnes in her turn tried them, but protested vehemently against the torture to which they put her hitherto unfettered limbs.

It was different, however, on the introduction of the professors of music and singing: whatever their morals might be, their music was good; and the young Agnes, girl as she was, exhibited herself a perfect enthusiast in sweet sounds. As brilliant preludes were struck with a master's hand on the harp—as the finest passages of Beethoven, Paisiello, Rossini, and Meyerbeer, were rapidly executed on the piano—and as Italian cadenzas seemed to float on the air from the lips of the "Maestro," back-boards and stocks were forgotten—her eye lighted up with feeling—

her hands and lips moved in time and unison with the voice and the instrument—and she sat like one entirely absorbed in a delicious occupation.

No wonder, with such feeling united to a quick perception, and an aptitude at imitation, that she made rapid progress in this art, in which she took so much delight. Yet, even in her favourite pursuit, she was impatient of the prescribed rules, and would frequently dash at attempts without attending to them, and could not be called back to the acknowledgment of their necessity, till a discord struck upon her ear, and convinced her that some regulation of the notes was necessary. Could this have been the case with regard to the feelings of her heart—could a note of discord, or a moment of unhappiness have recalled her to the course from which her enthusiasm and temperament so often induced her to deviate, how much misery she might have been spared! But the science of human life is dependent upon no rules but those of feeling. Passion has no ear to call the wanderer back within the prescribed rules of society. There is no discord attending its plea-

asures, till the pleasures are passed away; and there is no path back again, but the bitter one of repentance.

What a blessing would be the possession of that ring, celebrated in the Fairy Tale, which pressed the finger of its possessor whenever he transgressed the limits of prudence and virtue! Yet perhaps, like the prince upon whom this treasure was bestowed, there is not one of us that would not throw it away when its often repeated admonitions became troublesome.

CHAPTER XII.

LOVE MECHANICS.

With all appliances and means to boot,
She came with melting glance and sigh,
To teach the young ideas to shoot
With Love's artillery.

ANON.

No sooner had Miss Wheeler become firmly settled in Mr. Fleming's household establishment, and obtained footings and magnificent stipends for all the various professors who followed in her train, than she began to recollect that she was in the house of a widower, not yet past the prime of life; and to imagine that by cleverness and management she might perhaps

turn her temporary establishment as a subordinate, into a permanent one, as the mistress of Mr. Fleming's family.

Miss Wheeler was, a woman of no slight experience, either with regard to her own or the other sex. She had been too long interested in studying the follies, and flattering the vanities of both, not to be pretty well aware of the weak and favourable side on which to attack them with the greatest hope of success; and where she had been able to discern the ruling passions of her employers, she had seldom failed in flattering them into an almost unbounded confidence.

By these means she had become acquainted with all those littlenesses of envy, hatred, and malice, by which, almost unknown to themselves, so many of the commonest actions of people's lives are regulated; and by flattering and gratifying these petty malevolences of her employers Miss Wheeler had wheedled herself into a very powerful and numerous connexion of patrons and patronesses; and what was still more wonderful, without yet having sacrificed her cha-

racter with any of the former, or exciting the jealousy of any of the latter.

But Miss Wheeler was, in the worldly sense of the term, a truly clever woman, with an eye so sharply turned to her own interest, that even the very high passions of which she was undoubtedly possessed, were very seldom permitted to turn her from this main object.

Dependent from an early period of her infancy upon, and educated by a selfish relation, who kept her in all the comforts which an ample annuity afforded, she was left, at her death, with every inclination for luxury, without any means to enjoy it; for the annuity died with her widow cousin; and Miss Wheeler, at twenty-two, found herself mistress of nothing but a very ample wardrobe, some powerful accomplishments, very high passions, and a fine person.

During the life of her relation, ignorance of her dependence, united to the influence of her personal attractions, had obtained for her one or two moderate offers of marriage, which she had spurned with indignation; and the hope of one

or two more of a higher cast had been annihilated on the death which left her destitute. Doomed therefore to seek her fortune, she embarked as a governess, and her connexion among people of fashion, who knew her accomplishments, soon procured her a series of appointments, in which she had very successfully exerted her talents of all sorts ; although she had never yet attained her main object, that of securing an establishment for life, by alluring some of the brothers or cousins of her various pupils into a matrimonial engagement.

* By recommending and attaching to her a certain set of foreign professors, she had contrived to double her income out of the allowances with which they paid for her recommendation ; and there had been whispers of too great an intimacy having subsisted between her and more than one of these “ talented ” Messieurs and Signori ; but that might be mere scandal. Be it as it may, she was no sooner safely housed in Grosvenor Square than, to use a vulgar phrase, she “ set her cap ” at Mr. Fleming.

Her experience had taught her that few men

are so susceptible of the tender assiduities and constant attentions of a fine young woman, as those who are past a certain age. Their recollection of former feelings are still too much alive to have given place entirely to the coldness of age and apathy; gout has not quite superseded the influence of the tender passion; and to find himself, when he has begun to feel his influence with the fair sex on the wane, an object of attraction to a fine dark-eyed girl, who "nothing loth," rather courts those worn-out gallantries, which others are beginning to spurn or to ridicule, is, it must be allowed, too flattering not to be felt. We are speaking of gentlemen about fifty; but of those who at that late period have not quite arrived at years of discretion.

Mr. Fleming was about this critical age, and being hale, hearty, and a widower, our governess, judging by former trials, was greatly in hopes that, with a little management, to be Mrs. Fleming the second was not quite out of the cards. She rallied therefore to her assistance all the little artillery of female blandishments, and carefully smoothing down all

the asperities of her character into softness, commenced the siege in good earnest.

It was in vain, however, that Miss Wheeler directed all the artillery of her really fine eyes at Mr. Fleming. Their glances fell harmless, and were unperceived and unfelt. It was in vain that she lowered her voice into a languishing tone whenever she addressed him, or sighed when he would sometimes look towards her. Nobody could be more insensible of the blandishments of a woman than Mr. Fleming, whose whole heart and soul had only one object in view, and that was the gratification of his vanity by the aggrandisement of his family. It was this, and not any affection for her person, or admiration of her excellent qualities, that had induced his marriage with Miss Agnes Dornton; nor could the years which he passed in the society of one so admirable in all respects in any degree change the current of his feelings, or engender one sentiment unconnected with this grand object; no wonder then that Miss Wheeler's charms were powerless on a heart surrounded with such an adamant bar-

rier of ambition. No wonder that such a man should be insensible to all the "delicate attentions" which Miss Wheeler studied to pay him, and which she sometimes carried so far as to attract the notice of the servants, and almost to rouse the suspicions of Lady Pomeroy, in spite of that lady's implicit confidence in, and blind admiration of, Miss Wheeler's superior qualities and fashionable manners; an admiration in which she was joined by Amelia; while Agnes, whose mind was more penetrating, and whose disposition was more inquisitive, and in whom a keen perception of the ridiculous was united with her other intense feelings, suspected the design of her governess, and amused herself and annoyed Miss Wheeler by a thousand instances of *espion-glerie*, of which she was afraid to complain, and which she forebore to resent, from the fear of opening the eyes of the family to the designs of which she was so guiltily conscious.

In addition to this knowledge of her intentions, of which she strongly suspected Agnes, she also accused her in her own mind as the person who had once or twice exposed the mys-

teries of her toilet-table to the eyes of the servants, by ranging her rouge-pots and cosmetics in battle array on the chimney-piece of her dressing-room, with a tell-tale towel besmeared with paint, hanging out as a banner, to proclaim the origin of those roses on which she so much prided herself.

Smarting under these feelings, rendered deeper by the necessity for restraining and concealing them, Miss Wheeler heartily and bitterly hated Agnes; and many was the vow registered in the privacy of her own breast, of the severity with which she should be visited when the title of mother-in-law would make her mistress of the house, and give her power over the offender as it was, her malice was shown in a thousand petty instances—in the difficulty of the tasks which she prescribed her—in misrepresentations with regard to her progress in her studies—and above all, in the praises, which she took every opportunity of bestowing on Amelia. Judging from her own littleness of feeling, that nothing was more galling than the praises of a contemporary—she could not calculate upon such a

mind as that of Agnes, which delighted in the praises she saw gave pleasure to her aunt and sister, even though they were so frequently made at her own expense.

It is thus that little minds seek to annoy, through the same means by which they feel they would themselves be annoyed; and they are quite at a loss to conceive how it happens, that arrows, which they dip in malevolence, and point with all the bitter gall of their own spirit, should fall powerless before the superiority of hearts and minds which they cannot understand. It is astonishing how many miseries we create for ourselves by the indulgence of these little and unworthy feelings of our nature. They point out the sore places of our minds and dispositions to those who wish to tease us, and we writhe under their effects, without creating either sympathy or condolence for that which we should not feel if we had never had the wish to inflict the same annoyances on others.

The perfect apathy of Mr. Fleming completely baffled all these attempts of Miss

Wheeler: he remained as utterly insensible to all her languishments, and sighs, and glances, as though his heart had been made of cast-iron; and the fair invader was beginning to despair of being any thing else than the governess in the family, when the arrival of Lady Pomeroy's son from Oxford gave a new turn to her ideas, and changed the object of her ambition.

The contrast between the staid Mr. Fleming's age of fifty-two or three, and young Pomeroy's youth of twenty-one, was not greater than that between their dispositions.

The one all coldness, ambition, and prudence; the other all fire, impetuosity, and impulse.

Fresh from college, with Ovid in his head, and romance in his heart, unused to the society of elegant women; but with ideas of the sex which were the result of his imagination more than his experience, he was just the person on whom the charms of Miss Wheeler were likely to make an impression.

Being the only male relation of Mr. Fleming, and the only son of his sister, he was destined to be the medium through which the ambitious

schemes which they had jointly formed, were to be accomplished; for Mr. Fleming wished a branch of his own family to be ennobled, and he had therefore determined upon a marriage between young Pomeroy and Amelia, in the hope that the influence of the Dornton family, united to the power of his own wealth, would procure a baronetcy for him on his taking the name of Fleming.

Young Pomeroy was therefore the hopes of the family; and blessed with a fine person and great animal spirits, with a kind, generous, and feeling heart, he seemed every thing that Mr. Fleming and Lady Pomeroy could wish, excepting that he had not sufficient ambition for the one, or quite enough attention to etiquette and *bienséance* for the other.

Wild and ungovernable in his spirits, with a heart keenly alive to the admiration of the other sex, and with passions which, like touchwood, required but a spark to set them in a blaze, he was just the person upon whom Miss Wheeler might be supposed to use her "Love Mechanics" with effect. The moment therefore of his ar-

rival, and of her ascertaining that he was really twenty-one, and in consequence a free agent, she changed her operations; and quitting the uncle, attacked the nephew with all "Love's artillery."

The youth of Pomeroy, by giving her additional excitement, and perhaps by giving more reality to her attentions,—for when has not twenty-one this advantage over fifty-three?—gave a greater impetus to them, and rendered them more attractive; and poor Henry soon began to feel the effect of her dark lustrous eyes upon his heart, much in the same manner as the fleet of Marcellus felt the power of the burning glasses of Archimedes—by which, history says, that great philosopher scorched the Roman "hearts of oak" to cinders.

It was not, however, by these open attacks that his youthful heart was so much won, as by those stolen glances, withdrawn as soon as discovered—those sighs, which seemed to seek for utterance through useless resistance—that heaving bosom, that appeared to speak a "thousand soft inquietudes within;" and above all, the *sotto*

voce lamentations over that destiny which rendered her dependent, and which made the control of her best and warmest feelings an imperative duty. This was the right chord to strike on, in a heart too apt to view the injustice of poverty with sympathy ; and this feeling soon engendered in young Pomeroy the idea of remedying this injustice.

Miss Wheeler perceived the ground she was gaining on his inexperience ; but the ordeal of Oxford had not been passed by Pomeroy without many ideas totally unconnected, though not quite incompatible with matrimony : of this Miss Wheeler's knowledge of mankind taught her to beware, and she felt the necessity of engaging his honour and generosity, or rather of entrapping them, as well as his love ; if, indeed, the passion she had inspired deserved that name.

When the head of a woman and the heart of a man are both directed to the same object, and they live under the same roof, opportunities will not long be wanting to come to a right understanding ; if that can be called a right under-

standing which generally sets every thing to wrongs.

Lady Pomeroy and Mr. Fleming were generally late in the breakfast-room: this gave the opportunity for a quarter of an hour's flirtation before they came down: this quarter of an hour gradually extended to a longer period. At first, it seemed to arise from accident—then from a tacit intention of both parties—and ultimately from a decided assignation. The drawing-room before dinner afforded a second legitimate opportunity for particular conversations; while numberless accidental meetings on staircases, in passages, in the picture-gallery, and in the library, gave them others, certainly shorter, but which Miss Wheeler knew well how to render interesting.

Still nothing definitive passed as to the nature of his sentiments; and Miss Wheeler knew too much to attempt to encourage a declaration of them, unless it could be accompanied with the offer of his hand; for it was with her as Othello thought it was with Desdemona, “hand,

not heart," although she studied to make him believe that he was gradually, against her own will, gaining ground in her affections. This was too gratifying to his youthful vanity not to be easily perceived; and the idea of her affection not only softened his heart, but raised the lady considerably in his estimation.

These frequent meetings, however, with the same thoughts in each other's heads, and feelings something similar in each other's hearts, could not long continue without some decided consequence. Flint and steel cannot come into collision without producing a flame; and so it happened with Miss Wheeler and Henry Pomeroy. The library was destined to be the scene of this eclarcissement—a poem of the impassioned Byron the immediate cause of ignition. With a throbbing pulse, and beating heart, and burning lips, Henry poured forth the effusions of a youthful passion, and with a blushing face, a downcast look, and convulsive sigh, she rested her head upon his bosom, and listened to his vows, and felt his kisses, as though they were the first vows that had ever met her

ear—the first kisses that had fastened on her lips.

Still no word of marriage struck upon her anxious ear; and she lingered several moments in his arms, in the hope that the desirable sound would still finish one of the many broken sentences which Henry poured forth; but he had not yet entirely lost his senses.

Finding that she waited in vain, she started from him, bade him begone, threw herself on a sofa, and buried her face in her hands, calling herself an unhappy creature, degraded in her own eyes—abased in those of him she — and here her voice seemed to falter, and became *entrecoupé*, as the French expressively call it; its accents became softer, and the remainder of her lamentation was lost in the multitude of sobs which seemed to threaten a termination in that truly feminine disease, “hysterics.”

Henry Pomeroy was overcome; he flew to the sofa; he threw his arms round her; pressed her to his bosom; whispered a thousand vows of constancy and of affection; and would perhaps have proceeded in his promise

to the extent of Miss Wheeler's wishes, when his love and her arts were astonished into silence by the sudden apparition of the countenance of Agnes, peeping over the back of the sofa. How long she had been there, and whether she had been a witness of the whole scene, they could not tell: a smile played upon her intelligent countenance as she slid out of the room before her cousin could stop her; and before she had half ascended the stairs, they heard her give way to long and repeated bursts of laughter.

Nothing reduces the *alto* feelings of lovers so much as a discovery of this sort. All the romance of an interview is destroyed in a moment, and a certain feeling of silliness steals over the conscious minds of both parties, that has the effect of creating a kind of contempt for each other, and conveys to them something like that sensation which has been illustrated by the position of a dog's tail when stealing out of a room in disgrace.

The lady was the first to recover herself, and perceiving the only use which she could make

of the circumstance, began to lament the false constructions which would be placed upon her conduct; the loss of character, which would be the consequence; together with all the dreadful results that must naturally follow to a poor dependant like herself. She then blamed his too ardent passion and persuasions, and her own too confiding and susceptible heart. She pleaded and upbraided by turns; till, urged by his passion, and really fearful of the too probable truth of many of her surmises, he soothed her with a direct proposition to remedy all by becoming her legal protector.

At the moment that he sealed this promise with his lips, and finding her no longer the resisting creature she had been while her point was unattained, she sunk in his arms, and was in the act of pledging her vows in return for Henry's, when Lady Pomeroy burst into the library.

Indignation had quite driven all ideas of ceremony and *bienséance* out of her head, and she came on the offending parties with all that vehemence of rage which generally characterises

the anger of the vulgar, rather than of the educated ; but anger, real downright anger, is anger in all classes of the community, and shows itself pretty much in the same manner in Berkeley-Square as in Billingsgate. Miss Wheeler saw the coming storm, and not knowing what else to do, fainted *ex tempore*, by way of leaving the battle to Henry. His ideas, as well as all fear of his mother, were put to flight, however, the moment he saw his mistress apparently insensible, and he bent over her with intense anxiety, though he felt some surprise that no change whatever should take place in her complexion.

Agnes, who had followed her aunt into the room, immediately seized a bottle of eau de Cologne from one of the bronze stands on a pier table, and before Miss Wheeler was aware of her intention, so contrived to use it on her features, that Henry had not longer to wonder at her unchanged complexion.

Her fainting was immediately succeeded by hysterics, and Henry continued to soothe her, in spite of the angry denunciations of his mother, and of the grave and would-be-dignified looks

of Mr. Fleming, who had been attracted by the unusual bustle in the library.

It is astonishing in what different lights different people view the same things. Thus, Lady Pomeroy called Miss Wheeler "artful hussey"—"perfidious minx"—"deceitful hypocrite;" while her son designated her under the more tender appellation of "injured innocence"—"calumniated excellence"—and "deserted orphan."

During this violent altercation between mother and son, Miss Wheeler kept up a kind of hysterical accompaniment, which filled up the hiatuses occasioned by Lady Pomeroy's indignation and Henry's tenderness; when her kerchief, having been partly removed to facilitate her breathing, becoming loose, a letter dropped from her bosom on the floor, which was immediately snatched up by Lady Pomeroy. Miss Wheeler was sensible of the circumstance, and starting at once into the full possession of her senses, she darted from Henry's arms towards Lady Pomeroy, to regain the letter and prevent its perusal. But she was too late. Forgetting all her usual attentions to ceremony, that lady was already

in the midst of the letter, and consequently in possession of Miss Wheeler's secret, and of a knowledge of her imprudence.

She saw that concealment was at an end ; that discovery and disgrace were inevitable ; and what was before feigned, became real agitation. She covered her face, now really burning with blushes which crimsoned her forehead and her neck, with her handkerchief. Her sobs became convulsive, almost to suffocation : she screamed and stamped her foot upon the ground ; and, in the extremity of her now real agony of shame, would have done violence to herself, had she not been prevented by Henry.

In the meantime, astonishment seemed to have silenced Lady Pomeroy's indignation. She handed the letter to Mr. Fleming, upon whose apathetic countenance even a flush of indignation was seen to pass in its perusal. His mother then, resuming her usual demeanour, handed the epistle to Henry, desiring him to learn from that, the infamy of the object for whom he was ready to fly in the face of propriety—violate his filial duty—and overturn

the well-matured projects of his respectable uncle. A faint "Oh—no! no—no!" was uttered by Miss Wheeler. But Henry's curiosity was painfully aroused by the complete change which the letter had so magically wrought upon his mother and uncle. He seized the paper, and with a pale countenance and trembling hand, read an epistle by which he learned, that had he persisted in marrying Miss Wheeler, his first child, at any rate, might certainly have had the honour of claiming the professor of Calisthenics as its father. The letter was from this worthy teacher of exercises, in reply to one in which she had stated and requested his advice in her critical situation; and he complied with her request, by urging the completion of her matrimonial schemes upon either the "superannuated uncle" or "the inexperienced nephew:" and concluded with pretty broad allusions to the facility with which the accomplishment of either of these projects might hide the fruits of their present, and tend to the concealment of future indiscretions.

Here was a downfall for poor Henry's vanity

—here was a cruel catastrophe to his first romance—here was a tearing up root and branch of all his confidence in woman—of all his belief in her innocence, and her protestations in future.

How many of the best feelings of a youthful and manly breast have been thus annihilated, and turned to their contraries, by the discovered schemes of a heartless and an artful coquette!

This was a scene *bien vif* for the usually decorous and phlegmatic establishment of Mr. Fleming.

Henry rushed out of the library without a look at the “quondam mistress of his soul.”—She upon whom within the last quarter of an hour he had gazed with passionate love, he could not now think upon without loathing. Within ten minutes he was in a chaise and four on his road to Oxford, forswearing all woman-kind, and thinking upon none of his classics, but the

Aspera et horrenda virgo

of Virgil: though even here the recollection of the Calisthenic professor rendered the allusion

inapplicable. Perhaps, after all, his vanity was more mortified than his affection; and I much question, whether this is not the mortification most difficult to be forgiven.

Well—Henry went to Oxford and his classics; Miss Wheeler was driven in a hackney-coach, number 942, to her professor of Calisthenics; Agnes made her maid dance a minuet to her *Te Deum* on the piano, in joy for their deliverance from the governess; Lady Pomeroy betook herself to Lady Betty Vincent, to tell how her recommendation had been disgraced; and to spread far and wide the defalcation from virtue of Miss Wheeler; and Mr. Fleming betook himself to the Court Guide.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FINISHING SCHOOL.

For to that seminary of fashion vain
The rich and noble from all parts repair,
Where, grown enamour'd of the gaudy train,
And courteous 'haviour gent and debonnair,
They cast to imitate such semblance fair.
What dream they of—that with so little care
They risk their hopes—their dearest treasure there !

THERE is scarcely any body in the habit of reading those emporiums of intelligence—those propagators of rumour—those indiscriminate disseminators of truth and falsehood, in which every thing necessary in life, from a wet-nurse to an undertaker, may be puffed and made known

—the English newspapers—that has not observed, during the summer and Christmas vacations, the multitude of advertisements which relate to education.

To read these, one would suppose our country was peopled with sages ; and that learning, philosophy, morals, and accomplishments, were every where to be as easily acquired as the silks and ribands and quack medicines, which figure away in the same columns with ladies' seminaries and classical academies.

Here, the whole store of classic learning, together with reading, writing, and arithmetic, fencing, dancing, and the use of the globes, is to be acquired by young gentlemen for annual stipendiary sums, from twenty-five guineas in Yorkshire to two hundred guineas near the metropolis : and there, we find ornamental needle-work, French, Italian, music, dancing, fancy-works, and all the rest of the feminine accomplishments, attainable at different “ Establishments for young Ladies,” for about the same prices.

And of what class of society in general do

these schoolmasters and mistresses consist?—To whom is it that we intrust the sacred charge of forming the young minds of our children, and giving them that stamp which is to influence their passage through life? Why, principally, broken-down tradesmen, or professional men and their wives; who, having failed in their original calling in life, have no other means of support left than becoming coal-merchants, or wine-merchants, or schoolmasters and mistresses:—the three grand resources for all ruined people who wish to redeem their fortunes.

If a husband dies leaving a widow with an unprovided family, her friends immediately project a ladies' establishment; and with a partial knowledge of her own language, and even that of the most moderate kind, she sets up for a teacher of all; and with the assistance of some French demirep, whose morals and conduct have driven her from her own country; or perhaps, as has been the case more than once, a French *femme de chambre* for a mistress of French; a French valet for a dancing-master; and a profligate Italian refugee for a pro-

fessor of music ; sets up a school in which our English girls of a certain caste are to be fitted for wives and mothers. The poor children of every friend of the widow, and of all her friends' friends, are put in requisition, till a sufficient number is collected to furnish an income ; and many a fortune is made by the savings from the board, by profits on books, and forfeited silver forks and spoons, and by the charges for educating these little urchins, who may be considered fortunate if they return home as empty-headed as they came.

This is not at all a caricature description of the origin and formation of most of those establishments to which is intrusted the education, and consequently the happiness and virtue, of those to whom parents look for the comfort of their old age ; as might easily be discovered, were the numerous professors of French, music, and dancing, who figure away at ladies' establishments and finishing schools in and near London, compelled to produce certificates of characters and occupations in their own country. Such schools as these are, however, only for the

commonalty—for the second-rate citizen and tradesman—for the petit placeman, and all those of confined income. These are the only persons who are now taken in by the promises of these advertising dealers in education.

It was rather surprising amidst all the indignation expressed at the dereliction of Miss Wheeler, and amongst all the invectives with which her conduct was assailed by Lady Pomeroy and Mr. Fleming, that no thought occurred as to the very slight claims such a person possessed to be intrusted with the care of two young ladies of such tender ages, as those of Amelia and Agnes.

They never cast one reflection upon themselves, for having been so easily and so perfectly satisfied with the recommendation of a flighty woman of fashion, who was anxious to get rid of a troublesome protégée, for one of the most important offices of life; nor cast one atom of blame upon the precipitance with which the exhibition of a few showy and glittering accomplishments, had induced them to adopt a perfect stranger as the guide to the minds and

morals of two children, to whom her examples and precepts might have formed the bane of their future lives.

Sickened as Mr. Fleming was of governesses by the attempt of Miss Wheeler to pollute the blood of his family, which he had striven so hard to render noble in future by his alliance with the Dorntons ; at the very source of that stream which he had hopes would in time flow into such a broad channel of nobility, that its mercantile origin would be forgotten : he yet could not think of permitting his daughters to run the risk of contact with any other than the children of people in fashion, in a public establishment. He was also pretty well aware of the small claim that the generality have to teach, or even to superintend the teaching of, the accomplishments they profess.

But in this wide metropolis—this epitome of the world at large—this congregation of vice and virtue—this grand union of contraries of all descriptions—there are times, places, and people, to meet all circumstances and situations.

Here are decayed people of fashion, or distant and collateral branches of gentility, as well as bankrupts of the middling orders of society, who undertake the care and cultivation of the female mind, or rather the regulation of their manners and persons; although they will never sully their establishment with any other than the scions of nobility.

Some of these undertake to bring out two or three young ladies who may be deprived of their parents; and contrive by the addition which this plan affords to their income, still to keep their place in society, and to make their houses still the resort of people of fashion.

Others, again, make a more open display of their pretensions to educate; and though they despise the drudgery of "teaching the young idea how to shoot," profess to finish young ladies of fashion in all the elegant accomplishments of the concert, the ball, and the drawing-room.

Of these, Mrs. Dashington had attained the greatest celebrity. A year or two's initiation was sure to give the stamp of fashion to any one who was fortunate enough to enjoy her protec-

tion. Her establishment was to young women, not educated at home, what the university is to young men ; and the young ladies who had graduated in it, were considered at once fit for all the honours of presentation and the drawing-room.

By the help of her various professors, she had completely succeeded in giving her pupils that which the French call *tournure*—that air *distingué* which pleases and impresses the mind, without our knowing why, and which frequently bears the palm of admiration away from beauty itself.

The first thing, according to Mrs. Dashington's system of education, was "manner"—the second thing was "manner," and the third thing was "manner:" thus every thing was sacrificed to its attainment.

The whole of her ethics consisted in doing every thing like a woman of fashion : her pupils sang and danced with the most exquisite taste and judgment—but they sang and danced like ladies, and not like professors. In short, it was a universal observation, that a young lady who had

enjoyed the advantages of Mrs. Dashington's establishment, was never known to utter a sound of discord—in her music—or commit a *faux pas*—in a minuet or a quadrille.

As to principles and temper, they were beneath the consideration of an aristocratic school-mistress ; and as the end of her education was merely to procure husbands for her pupils, why, if their principles and tempers held out till they were married, the end was accomplished ; and it was the husband's business to preserve and keep—or endure them afterwards.

This was the very person to suit Mr. Fleming's and Lady Pomeroy's notions of female education ; and interest was immediately made for the admission of Amelia and Agnes to her house in —— Square.

Mrs. Dashington, from her intimate knowledge of the peerage, was perfectly aware of the Miss Flemings' claims to family connexion by the mother's side ; and her respect for the immense wealth of Mr. Fleming was some palliation in her eyes for the want of it on his. The arrangements therefore were soon completed ;

and the young ladies accompanied Lady Pomeroy to be introduced to their new protectress, from whom they were to derive those finishing touches, which the master-artists give to their pictures before they send them to the exhibition.

Our heroines were presented in due form to six or eight young ladies, who were at that time the inmates of Mrs. Dashington's fashionable establishment; among these, there was but one who had any pretensions to travel out of the usual characteristics of commonplace boarding-school girls; and this was Lady Emily Trevor, who, to much sweetness of disposition, and a feeling heart, united a portion of talent, and what was still more rare, a degree of prudence, which is seldom the accompaniment of youth, genius, and beauty.

The rest were such common-place characters as one meets with in every boarding-school or family. All their ideas centred in a certain routine of lessons; all their ambition extending only to shine at those parties of Mrs. Dashington, at which they were permitted to be present;

parties wherein they first contrive to exert their incipient coquetry, and from which, alas! too many of them learned lessons not to be unlearned by their future career.

And here, by the bye, a word or two on the propriety and regulation of establishments of this kind. They are, of course, generally kept by needy persons; and those persons are but too apt to lie under pecuniary and other obligations, which they are willing enough to return by invitations to all the little *fêtes* which the nature of their occupation enables them, and, in some instances, requires them to give.

By these means, young women are brought in contact with persons of the other sex, whom they never could have met at the houses of their parents; and while the youthful mind is too fresh in life, and too unhacknied in the conventional distinctions of society, to place a proper value upon rank and equality of worldly circumstances, they are but too open to the impression which a pleasing exterior and address, and agreeable conversation, intermixed with a little flattery, is too likely to be made by the first

man who has ever talked to her as though she were, and has made her feel that she *was*, a woman.

There are, in consequence, few of these establishments in which there is not a great danger of a young woman's forming connexion, which can never be pleasing to their more ambitious parents; for while there are idle and briefless barristers, with wit enough to make themselves agreeable—young officers, with sufficient dash and gallantry to captivate the female heart—and wealthy dandy sons of merchants, with power to command opera boxes for the duenna of the establishment—there will always be a crowd of young men who will flock to a “flirtation general,” with young ladies of a rank in life whom they could never meet with by any other means than their acquaintance with the school-mistress. This fault, and a most dangerous one it is, exists in all the gradations of these establishments; and, in many cases, the foundation of those unequal alliances, which embitter so many parents' hearts, and disappoint so many expectations, have had their origin

in these schools of embryo coquetry—in these scenes of incipient flirtation.

Those who imagine the room appropriated to study in Mrs. Dashington's establishment to resemble any thing like a common school, would be most egregiously mistaken.

There was no long desk at which the pupils were confined to pursue their studies; no torturing stocks, to twist their toes into north by north-east, and south by south-west; no back-boards of bright red morocco, with a steel collar to be passed under their chin, to keep their heads up. No: the young ladies of Mrs. Dashington's establishment could hold up their heads high enough without any such mechanical assistance; they had only to think upon their birth—upon their ancestors—upon their aunt the marchioness—their cousin the countess—or their fortune; and crown the whole by the exclusive reputation of being a pupil of the —— Square school, to enable them to hold up their heads quite high enough for any purpose in the world.

Indeed, long after they had quitted it, and

were "out," as the phrase is, and very well applied in some instances, they were too apt to think very little of all the new presentations, who had not taken their degrees as "Mistresses of Arts" in Mrs. Dashington's university; and some of her very exclusive *élèves* were once on the point of establishing an annual quadrille of her ex-pupils, after the manner of the dinner of some of our public schools, and admit none but Christ-church men as their visitors, only that the husbands of some of them having had the misfortune to have been matriculated at Magdalen Hall, Wadham, and St. John's, did not like to leave their wives at the mercy of the gentlemen commoners of Christ-church.

In the stead of all the above-enumerated common appendages of a boarding-school, Mrs. Dashington's pupils' room exhibited elegant library tables, covered with all the lighter literary productions of the day, mixed up with a thousand knick-knacks in or-molu, china, bronze, paper, and pasteboard.

The principal portion of the literature of the establishment consisted in the novels of the

day, the poems of Byron and Moore, and the various effusions of "Flowers of Poesy," and all the host of little "prettynesses," which daily emanate from the ever-teeming press of modern publications, in magazines, annuals, repertories, &c.

These the young ladies were allowed to read indiscriminately; nor, as long as they paid sufficient attention to the professors of music and dancing—as long as they moved to admiration in a minuet, or swept the strings of their harp, or touched the keys of the piano with elegance—did Mrs. Dashington trouble herself much about the regulation of their minds.

Manners were her profession, and morals were out of the question; thus inactive minds had leisure and opportunity to give way to their indolent propensities; while those of a more active tendency might, perhaps, with greater danger, indulge in the indiscriminate perusal of all the flimsy, and often pernicious books which lay upon Mrs. Dashington's tables.

The flimsy parts of these productions, Agnes had strength of mind and intellectual superi-

ority enough to despise ; but where there was passion and feeling, the gush of genius, and the genuine warmth of poetry—where there was the true or the overwrought history of hearts and their propensities—her own heart was too apt to mislead her judgment, and, in spite of her own right tendencies, she laid up a store of hypotheses which, on a mind differently constituted, might have engendered principles and a *code morale* of a very dangerous nature. There was, however, implanted in her breast such an innate sense of right, that this reading only made her find apologies for the failings of others, without exciting a temptation in a heart so pure as her own ; and conscious of this correct feeling, she would often violently assert her independence, by defending the guilty as well as the injured, against the vituperations and calumnies of public report.

These points of her character, however, the firm friendship which she had contracted with the Lady Emily Trevor in some measure counteracted.

Lady Emily united prudence with feeling ;

and with a judgment more mature than her years, she attempted, and in some measure succeeded, in a regulation of her friend's more ardent temperament.

Lady Emily was the sister of the Charles Trevor who had danced with Agnes on an evening which still remained most vividly impressed upon her remembrance; and her features bearing a slight resemblance to her brother's, recalled all the recollections of that evening, with their subsequent childish meetings on the seashore, with sensations a little more allied to the feelings of the woman, than they were when those half-stolen interviews were enjoyed at Brighton.

Lady Emily, too, wished nothing more than to make a sister of her friend, and lost no opportunity of speaking well of Charles, whom she loved with all the fondness of a sister's love; and who that has ever had a sister, does not know how strong that love is, and how often a sisterly affection renders a woman blind to a brother's failings?

This circumstance begot a confidence between

these two young ladies, which led to a close intimacy. Agnes loved the Lady Emily for her kindness, her goodness of disposition, and perhaps for her likeness to her brother; but she thought her friend's mind a little too commonplace—a little too much given to tread in the beaten track which others had trod before, and too apt to regulate her feelings by her head, instead of permitting her actions and emotions to be dictated entirely by her heart.

Lady Emily loved Agnes for the generosity of her disposition. She loved her even for her romance, though she saw its dangerous tendency; and she admired the vigour of her intellect, and the richness of her imagination. But she did the utmost in her power to curb those ebullitions of her feelings, which were ever bursting out into violent emotions of indignation at oppression, or of unqualified admiration at efforts of intellect or generosity.

She saw all the sterling good qualities of her heart, the almost stern uprightness of her mind, in spite of all the softness engendered by her

course of reading, and in spite of all the excuses which her generous kindness could find for the dereliction of others.

She felt that such a woman would make an invaluable wife for her darling brother, and trusted that such qualities would fix for ever the wavering mind of Charles Trevor. Agnes' own recollection of her former intercourse, her romantic ideas of first love, and early impressions, rendered her secretly almost as anxious for this event as her friend; and the image of Trevor, thus kept alive in her mind, no wonder that, when time and chance threw him in her way, her heart was just in the state to deceive itself, and to receive the impression which the ardent impetuosity of a young man's passion was calculated to inspire.

During this period Trevor was abroad; and though he was not a very constant correspondent, yet, as the few letters that Lady Emily received from him gave lively descriptions of the places he had passed through, and were plentifully chequered with "blue skies of Italy," the "banks of the Arno," and the "sublime of

the Alps and Apennines," they impressed them both with the idea *that he was a man of taste and feeling ; and those descriptions were well calculated to keep alive the romance which had been already woven in the imagination of Agnes.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FAUX PAS.

I want a hero: an uncommon want,
When every year and month sends forth a new one,
Till, after cloying the gazette with cant,
The age discovers he is not the true one;
Of such as these I should not care to vaunt,
I'll therefore take our ancient friend, Don Juan.

BYRON.

By this time we little doubt but many of our readers are wondering where the hero of the tale is concealed, and are turning over every chapter in "double quick time," as the military say, hoping to find out the ROUÉ. It is, however, the province of the skilful dramatist to keep back his principal character till the second, and sometimes the third act; nay, in some in-

stances, we have known him introduced only just in time for the denouement, and indeed that is the principal part of the work, whether novel or play, in which he is necessary.

The subordinate characters may keep up, prolong, and perhaps attenuate the interest, which the hero arrives in time to complete. Besides, there is, perhaps, some art in thus keeping back the character whose life we profess to write.—Mystery, we all know, excites an interest, which its removal frequently destroys. The interest of Mokanna is kept alive only so long as his veil is unlifted: the revelation of his countenance makes him a common hero; and a common hero, at least a modern hero, is a mere nobody—a mere coat and breeches part, as it is phrased in the technicals of the green-room. There is likewise a difficulty in our hero which is uncommon—the difficulty of creating a Roué bad enough to make him interesting, without rendering him so bad as to frustrate such an intention: though this difficulty is in the present instance somewhat obviated by our hero's having made himself to our

hands ; and we send the personage to the world just as nature, education, and habit have formed him. Perhaps we ought not to enumerate nature as having any hand in the formation of his character.

Our only duty is to give him a fair chance in his debut. Denied the flourish of trumpets which precedes and gives dignity to the entrance of a dramatic hero ; or the privilege of making him sing a song behind the scenes, to create a favourable impression in favour of his voice and music in the audience ; the novelist is reduced to the necessity of a mere verbal description.

Had he been a veritable Don Juan, we might have given him the advantage of a trap-door, and a handful of flames. But as he is neither more nor less than one of those wild spirits who are to be found every where spending a princely fortune, and mispending time, with considerable talents in the pursuit of any pleasure that presented itself, travelling out of the beaten track in quest of new sensations, and rushing into every thing that gave

Hope of a pleasure, or peril of a grave :

why we must content ourselves with the introduction which one of his own mad acts gave him to the notice of society. An act which was conveyed to the public through the following mysterious paragraphs in the morning and evening papers,—paragraphs which about this period excited a great deal of surprise and scandal in the fashionable world; and a great deal of speculation in that portion of the world which could not claim this enviable distinction:—

PARAGRAPH I.

“The circles of haut-ton are much occupied just now with a discovery which implicates a young and lovely countess with a certain notorious, dashing, and elegant baronet.”

PARAGRAPH II.

“The parties alluded to in our columns of yesterday, are supposed to be the young and lovely Countess of M—— and Sir R—— L——e. The lady was married only three years since to her present lord, who is the head of one of the most ancient families in the king-

dom. The gallant Baronet has distinguished himself as much in the fields of Mars as in the bowers of Venus; and it is whispered that this is the third time that he has given some hopes of a profitable cause to the gentlemen of the long-robe."

PARAGRAPH III.

"Faux-pas in fashionable life.

"The names of the frail fair one and of her gallant paramour are in every body's mouth in certain circles; but until the publicity of the law shall make them known, our readers must pardon us for a concealment which delicacy renders necessary. It is said that the estrangement of the lady from her husband for the last few months had given rise to the jealousy, whose vigilance was at length rewarded; if a husband can call it reward, with the full conviction that it was well founded. The lady, conscious of this, contrived to escape through the garden of the family-mansion in — Square, where she was met by the gallant Baronet and a faithful friend, and conveyed to a place of concealment and security. There are various opinions afloat

upon this interesting topic in the fashionable world. Some blame the nobleman for marrying a lady so much younger than himself. Others think he paved the way to his own dishonour by the admission of such a fascinating and notorious gallant to such close and continued intimacy. As to the frail heroine of the adventure, she is blamed, and pitied, according to the feelings and characters of those engaged in the disquisition."

PARAGRAPH IV.

"Further particulars.

"Many of the circumstances connected with the late *faux-pas* are of such a nature, as to throw a particular interest over the whole affair. The youth and beauty of the guilty pair—the violence of their passion—the contrivance of their stolen pleasures—their hair-breadth escapes—their moon-light interviews—together with the sworn gallantry and acknowledged bravery of the gay Lothario, have given to the whole adventure a tincture of romance, which has rendered it the most interesting occurrence

of the kind that has happened for half a century.

“ It is said, that certain gentlemen of the long-robe are already retained ; that Mr. B—— has, in conversation, expressed some portion of the bitter sarcasm for which he is famed, and with which he hopes to induce the jury to mitigate the damages : while Mr. C. P—— is dressing up a most affecting account of the domestic felicity which has been violated by the spoiler, and of the virtue that has become the prey of the destroyer.”

These were the paragraphs that drew every female eye to that corner of the paper set apart for intelligences of this nature ; and greedily were they read and commented upon by the young ladies of Mrs. Dashington's establishment : who felt a peculiar interest in all they understood of the affair, from the circumstance of the “ fallen fair one” having been a pupil of their “ University ;” and one of those whose rank and influence were the pride and glory of Mrs. Dashington.

That lady lifted up her hands and eyes with astonishment at this lapse of prudence, as she

called it, in a pupil of hers; and wondered that only a three years' intercourse with the world should have produced such a change in her mind and morals, as to have occasioned such a dereliction from duty and propriety—as to be found out. A few days afterwards, the following *historiette* gave additional interest to the affair:—

PARAGRAPH V.

“ *Duel in high life.*

“ A meeting took place yesterday morning, in the neighbourhood of Hounslow, between Sir R—— L——e, the hero of the late *crim. con.* affair, and the gallant and honourable Colonel F——, the brother of the lady: the ~~former~~ was attended by the Honourable F—— V——, and the gallant Colonel by a brother officer. The parties arrived on the ground about seven in the morning in two hired chaises, which were stationed in a bye lane leading to Cranford; it being an affair in which the interference of seconds could be of no avail, none was attempted. The Colonel saluted his antagonist when they met, with that *froide politesse* which distin-

guishes the salutation of a determined enemy: the gay Lothario returned it with a bow and a smile, and with a look of nonchalance and bravery, that would have graced a better cause. The ground was measured—and the pistols loaded by the seconds in solemn silence. Each second then brought his principal to his station: when Sir R—— L—— observing that his antagonist was placed in a direct line between himself and an oak tree, by which he was made a much more conspicuous mark, immediately pointed out the circumstance to the Colonel's second, who perceiving his error, and the advantage it gave the Baronet, immediately made a different arrangement, expressing his thanks for the hint.

“ At the signal given for firing, the gallant Colonel's pistol was discharged to the instant; and so well had it been directed, that the ball passed through the tie of his adversary's neck-cloth, who, to the surprise of all parties, had not even raised his pistol from his side.

“ Turning immediately to his second, Sir R—— L—— desired him to ascertain if the

Colonel was satisfied. Being answered in the negative, and requested to take his fire, the Baronet himself again put the question ; and on again receiving a negative, he deliberately turned round, and firing in an opposite direction at a tree nearly three times the distance from him that the Colonel was, lodged his ball directly in the centre of the trunk : then resuming his position, he signified to his friend that he was ready to take the second shot, as, by his not firing in the air, no termination had been put to the contest. The seconds here declared it impossible to proceed under such circumstances, and that the Colonel had done sufficient to satisfy his honour—in which he was compelled reluctantly to agree ; and the parties returned to town.

“ We understand that the moment the affair was settled, the gallant Baronet took off his neckcloth, and showed his friend and the surgeon, who had attended near the ground, that the ball had actually grazed his throat, and that his shirt-collar was nearly saturated with blood.”

This account was given as an authorised history of the affair in all the morning papers ; and

it was astonishing how the gallant bearing and generosity, as it was termed, of Sir R—— L——, turned the tide of public conversation and opinion in favour of the seducer.

Bravery and generosity are qualities which make more way with women, than perseverance and virtue; or, even than what is called honour, where it is not emblazoned with these accompaniments. His conduct on this occasion, conferred on the hero of the adventure a character that gave him a dangerous interest in the eyes of the young and inexperienced; and his fault was forgotten in the minds of many, in the contemplation of the romantic manner in which it had been perpetrated, and the dashing and daring gallantry with which its consequences had been braved.

A few, but those were not among the young, the thoughtless, and the gay, looked upon the nonchalance with which he had conducted himself in the field, only as an aggravation of his error; and considered him as standing there ready to rush into the presence of his Maker, in

the very act of defending the violation of one of his most sacred commandments.

As usual, upon such occasions, in this very just world of ours, the lips of censure were much more opened against the offending female than against her seducer. By her own sex, in particular, she was treated most unsparingly: nothing was remembered of her but her frailty; and they all vituperated her dereliction from virtue, without mentioning one alleviating circumstance in her favour. In recapitulating her crime, they forgot that its foundation was laid in the sacrifice which had been made of her youth and beauty at the shrine of interest and ambition: they forgot that her husband was three times her age, and, if the world spoke truth, with vices equal to his years; and they found no apology for her, in the remembrance that her seducer was a practised corrupter of the sex:—devoting the whole powers of a well-educated mind, a peculiarly graceful person, and a well-earned character for bravery, to that pursuit which had attained for him the title of

l'homme a bonnes fortunes, which being translated, means simply, "a successful scoundrel." But the French have very pretty terms and phrases for all sorts of crimes.

There had, however, been some circumstances connected with this *bonne fortune* of our hero's, which rendered it rather a more flagrant breach of trust, and a greater violation of hospitality and of friendship, than even our latitudinarian world of fashion could patronise; and for a wonder, thoughts were really entertained of excluding the gentleman as well as the lady from society, at least for a time. This idea was much patronised by the many of his own sex, who envied him for the superiority of his mind and person, and for the sway which he had long held in the high circles in which he moved; for he had long been the "glass of fashion in which every one dressed himself," and long given laws to the forms of hats, the cut of pantaloons, and the ties of cravats; a distinction which, to do him justice, he only enjoyed as it enabled him to make fools of the many, while, with his select few, he

laughed at their folly. Well would it have been for some of his coterie, had these been the only things in which they had imitated him. Circumstances, however, soon rendered the adoption of this measure of exclusion unnecessary, as he withdrew himself to the continent, till the affair should be blown over; an event which was announced in the *Kentish Chronicle*, dated Dover: and, till his reappearance upon the tapis of our history, where he is not at present necessary, we must be contented with these slight notices of the movements of our intended hero; for such is Sir R —— L ——.

PARAGRAPH VI.

“ On Thursday morning last, the gallant Baronet, who has lately made himself so conspicuous in the *beau-monde*, by his elopement with a certain celebrated Countess, arrived here in company with his frail companion, and the friend who was his second in the field. A private packet was immediately hired, in which the

whole party set sail for the continent, where it is rumoured that they intend to travel for some few months, until the legal and other processes consequent on the elopement are arranged."

This was the last paragraph upon an affair which proved one of the nine days' wonders of the fashionable world at that period.

But it was rather a curious sight to see the eight or ten young ladies of Mrs. Dashington's establishment eagerly waiting for the morning papers, and still more eagerly prying into them for all the information which was to be obtained upon this subject. It was curious too, to hear their disquisitions and opinions upon these paragraphs; and it would have been still more so to have known all their thoughts, and wishes, and feelings, to which their perusal and contemplation of this adventure had given rise.

Such details of such a circumstance were curious subjects for the study and contemplation of young and inexperienced female minds, just entering into life; and yet we are compelled to admit, that the newspapers which contained them were much more sought after, and reap

in the "finishing school," for the first four days after this affair, than any of the books which usually occupied their reading hours.

Amelia read it as a matter of course: she uttered the word "Shocking," cast up her eyes, and there was an end of the matter.

Agnes, one year younger in years, but five years older than her sister in feeling, read the accounts, and listened to all the observations to which they had given rise, with a mixed feeling of pity and horror, which she could not however entirely divest of something like admiration at the intrepidity of the hero of the tale; in which a youthful mind is too apt to find excuses for derelictions of this nature.

What a pity is it that the commencement and accomplishment of these offences are the only portions of them that meet the public eye; while the subsequent remorse, the soul-subduing years of solitary shame, the desertion of the man for whose evanescent love

they have lost

State, station, heaven, mankind's—their own esteem,

are all concealed, or known only to some pitying

friend, who still by stealth will kindly comfort the fallen fair one with a tear of pity; or to some menial, whose wages keep down her insolence, and purchase her unwilling attention, till death delivers the victim from the scorn of an unpitying world!

The result of these *liaisons* divested of their romance—the hours of solitude and shame—the tears of bitter repentance as they see the former companions of their youth and innocence rolling along in the full enjoyment of that “caste” of society, out of whose pale one unfortunate dereliction from the path of rectitude has thrown them—ought always to accompany the newspaper histories of these affairs. It would be a charitable and an awful lesson, to the young, romantic, and impassioned, were somebody to collect the subsequent lives of all the *divorcées* who figure away for a moment or two in the newspaper annals of gallantry. Perhaps, though the perfect annihilation of their names from all acknowledged recollection, except in some few cases, where guilt has “burned brighter than their shame,” and enabled them to

stem the torrent, or to bear it with unblushing
effrontery, ought to be a lesson awful enough in
its consequences, as it must prove

that all is o'er

For them on earth, except some years to hide

Their shame and sorrow deep in their hearts' core.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PRESENTATION.

For weeks within the shop, they say,
The maidens turned the night to day;
Assistants and *élèves* were tired,
And countless 'prentices expired :
Needle in hand, 'tis said, they died on,
'Till every dress was shaped and tried on—
'Till flounce and flower had found their station,
And every gown its destination.

B——F F——M.

FOR some two or three years the sisters continued at Mrs. Dashington's school, both becoming still more confirmed in all those habits of mind which had characterised their infancy—the one conforming to all the ceremonies of her

education, and thus becoming gradually a creature of mere form ; the other, drinking with avidity from all the streams of literature and poetry, which the miscellaneous and itinerate library of Mrs. Dashington's drawing-room provided, and by these means feeding rather than restraining and regulating the high and independent passions of her nature ; but with all these warm and impetuous feelings of the heart were mingled a nobleness of spirit, and a generosity of mind, which rendered her admired and beloved by every body. Her heart was perpetually in her hand, and on her lips ; what the one dictated, was the impulse to the actions and words of the other. Her allowance was entirely expended in indiscriminate charity, so that her wardrobe suffered dreadfully from this use—or misuse, as Mrs. Dashington called it, of her ample means. In short, all her actions were the result of impulse : the sight of misery was enough to draw a tear from her eye, and relief from her purse. She stopped not to inquire if the misery was real ; it was apparent, and that was sufficient.

She drew all her knowledge of life from

poetry, and creating an existence of her own, believed it to be the one through which she was to pass; but in spite of all this strong feeling, in spite of all her indiscriminate reading, there was a steady perseverance in right in every thing she did; and though she often acted without judgment, it was never without principle. But here was a being to be turned upon the great theatre of life. Here was a heart to go out among the heartless; and here were feelings and affections to become perhaps the prey of the male coquette, to be blighted by ingratitude, and to be chilled by the deceit which one meets with at every turning in the crooked paths of our existence.

Into this world, however, it was now decreed that she was to enter: due notices were given to Mrs. Dashington of the departures of the Misses Flemings; and Lady Emily Trevor was to quit at the same time.

As nothing could be done without a presentation at court, at least in Lady Pomeroy's ideas, this was the first thing thought of; and to her entire satisfaction, notices were just now

issued from the chamberlain's office, of an approaching drawing-room.

Her first presentation is an epoch of great importance in the life of a young lady. It gives her the first privilege of a woman, that of entering into dissipation. It is the signal that she is "out," and therefore ranked among those who are, for the future, open to receive cards for balls, and proposals of marriage. A first drawing-room is looked back to by many through a long life of gaiety and splendour, with keen sensations of regret and delight; and many an old dowager have we heard describe her hoop, and her festoons, and her feathers; and the gracious reception she met with in the circle of Queen Charlotte and George the Third, while she casts up her eyes, and shrugs her shoulders, at the change of costume, and at the admission of many who now parade before the King; but who, she avers, with a significant toss of the head, would never have been received at court in the good old days of Queen Charlotte. But this laxity of morals the ladies of the old school attribute to the abolition of

hoops. The buckram of propriety they aver to have been put off with these impregnable whale-bone defences ; and then they cast their glance towards a portrait of themselves decked out in all their courtly appendages, or upon the window-curtains, three of which had been made out of the damask of one petticoat of the ancient *régime* ; and sigh as they exclaim with all the old people that ever lived, whether they speak of decorum of conduct or of dress—" Ah ! it was not so in my younger days."

A drawing-room had, of late years, been scarce ; it was no surprise that the present one had been waited for with impatience, and looked forward to with anxiety.

For some weeks all the milliners and dress-makers from Conduit Street to South Audley Street had been in full occupation. The needle of the poor dear little seamstresses, who slave away their youth and beauty in these nunneries of needlework, had been plied early and late, with no other reward than the contemplation of the finery which was growing into shape under their ingenious fingers ; and strange to say,

this contemplation is a great delight to every female mind, even though she who contemplates is never destined to wear or to enjoy it: and hence the pleasures of shopping with one richer than ourselves: there is a kind of magic to the female heart in the touch of silks, and satins, and sarsnets, in the handling of lace, leno, and embroidery, which it is difficult for the other sex to conceive; excepting those unfortunates who have to pay the bills, which are the scarcely ever-failing sequence of such a temptation, when the fair one has any kind husband with credit enough attached to his name to place on the debtor side of a ledger in any of these emporiums of woman's vanity and ruin.

It used to be said of a certain very beautiful professor of the admirable arts of millinery and mantua-making, that she had been the cause of more matrimonial fracas than had ever occurred through the difference of tempers, irreconcilable dispositions, infidelity and jealousy, or the "thousand-and-one" causes that render the married life, in general, any thing but the Elysium which bachelor poets would make it. Her

beauty was of that sort which made any thing become her, or rather she became every thing.

Every day, therefore, her varied genius in the composition of caps and bonnets was exerted to produce something new, which she wore herself; and as every day is a levee-day at the shrines of Folly and Vanity, many were those who attributed the beauty of Mrs. B—— to the cap; and ordered it, under the supposition that it would confer the same charms on herself, which she had envied and admired in the *marchande des modes*.

“What a sweet cap!—what a charming bonnet! * Oh the celestial *fichu*!—the heavenly trimming!—the enchanting flounce! Was ever such an angelic taste! Look, my love”—to some new-made husband, who had still enough of his love left to attend his bride to her milliners—“Is it not beautiful?”

“Pray allow me to try it on, Ma’am. Really, it does become your Ladyship prodigiously; it is exactly the thing—Is it not, Sir? (or my Lord, or Sir Thomas, or whatever the poor man’s title might be)—I declare I had just the style

of your Ladyship's face in my mind when I composed that hat."

"No—had you though? Dear, how strange! Isn't it, love? Well, I really think I do look vastly well in it—don't you, my dear?"—Perhaps an approving smile, or a plain affirmative, might have immediately followed this appeal; but unfortunately, the same had been made for the last fortnight on a hundred of the same occasions.

"Well, it is certainly a sweet thing"—with a gentle sigh, and putting it down.

"Yes, it certainly is; and I have no doubt but that my Lady Dashly will seize upon it the instant she sees it:"—a sigh and a look from the wife, as her glance lingers over the beautiful bonnet—"or else Sir Charles Dashly, who comes here every day, will order it home for his Lady himself—to surprise her, in her dressing-room: a thing he frequently does," continued the astute milliner.

"Do you hear that, my love?" gently murmurs the Lady in her husband's ear.

"Though I am sure," continues the professor of vanity, "it is not at all in her style; and ex-

actly suits your Ladyship, as I mentioned to his Lordship just now."

What man can resist two pretty women?—the one whom he hopes to keep in good temper at home; while the other, perhaps her beauty, tempts to the hopes of propitiating abroad. The cap, bonnet, or dress, is sent to Grosvenor, Berkeley, Cavendish, or Portman Squares; and a tall dandy, with a starched collar, curled pate, and Brobdignag shirt-pin, mounted at a high desk, places an account of the articles before a certain quantity of pounds, shillings, and pence, in a voluminous ledger; which shows the lady's accuracy, to swell that bill, which is destined at the ensuing "merry Christmas" to occasion heart-burnings, distrust, and dislike, between two people who are linked together for the purpose of making each other happy.

How much domestic felicity is marred—how many years of happiness sacrificed—and how much respectability immolated at this shrine of female vanity!

We really believe, if a correct censorship were instituted as to all the causes of disagree-

ment, separation, and divorce, that the greatest number of these would be traced to the account—and accounts of milliners and mantua-makers.

There is scarcely a flounce that is not pregnant with the fire of discord—a cap or hat that does not set somebody together by the ears—a trimming purchased abroad that does not produce one at home, or a dress that does not induce a domestic squabble. But it is no matter—it was, and is, and ever will be the same. What was Eve's shame is her daughter's pride—though when, by the leaf of her husband, she first adopted her simple costume, she little dreamt of all the ramifications of pelisses, negligées, hoops, flounces, and furbelows, into which that costume has been amplified by the characteristics of modern female habiliments.

Well, to resume, the poor little seamstresses plied their needles—the plumassiers dressed up their feathers with all the pride of peacocks—mammās, governesses, chaperons, young ladies, and ladies'-maids, were in a bustle from morning till night: the milliners' doors were besieged;

every body thought to be first served, and every body thought themselves neglected.

It would be an endless task to describe the agonies which a crooked flounce, or an ill-adjusted gusset—a too narrow skirt, or too stiff a train—produced ; and then the dread that the dress might be sent home too late, and not allow sufficient time to put it on with effect, kept many a bright eye sleepless till the morning dawned.

At length, however, the eve of the important day arrived ; and whatever might be the lot of others, the two Misses Flemings' dresses were brought home in the carriage before they made their dinner-toilet the previous day.

Lady Pomeroy's orders had been liberal ; and the rich Mr. Fleming's pay being sure and speedy, and their bills unquestioned, the dress-makers were apt to leave some of nobler rank, whose pay was not quite so certain, to take their chance, or to go home at the last moment, rather than disappoint the Fleming family.

The instant the carriage was announced, a council was assembled—or rather a committee

of examination on the effect of what the previous council had determined. The mantua-makers' productions were displayed in Lady Pomeroy's dressing-room. The dressmaker, and the maids of the young ladies, did the best to display their works to advantage; and Lady Pomeroy and her nieces were perfectly satisfied.

As to Agnes, she was delighted; she examined every trimming, shook the train into a hundred different folds, descanted on the pearls, wished to begin to dress immediately, and was quite impatient, because Carbury had not sent the feathers. In short, as Lady Pomeroy said, she was quite plebeian in her pleasure. Even Amelia, however, expressed some delight at the elegance and splendour of the dresses; and talked with more animation on laces, flounces, and trimmings, than she had ever been known to exercise on any other subject.

It certainly is the right chord to strike: for what female heart does not vibrate to any sound in which this subject, so paramount, is involved?

Their own dresses, together with female won-

derment as to those of their acquaintance, furnished them with food for conversation during dinner and the evening, when they retired early, that they might commence the operation of dressing betimes in the morning.

It would be a safe bet on the dreams of this night, to lay a hundred to one that there was not one female fancy that did not revel through the night in dreams of diamond stomachers—festoons of pearls, hooped up with emeralds—sleeves fastened to the shoulder with buckles of amethyst—royal salutes, and the long train of other attendants on a presentation.

At length the morning arrives; and ladies'-maids, for the first time in their lives, are up with the larks—every thing is in readiness at the toilet-tables—the cheval glasses are so disposed that the best view of effect may be obtained—every article from the garter to the gloves—from the white satin slipper from Taylor's, to the gorgeous tiara and plumes which the united powers of Gray and Carbury have composed, is distributed where it can be called into action the moment its service is

required—a cup of coffee is hastily swallowed, and the important operation commences.

Now comes the trial of temper of maids and mistresses—the stupidity of the one, the fastidiousness of the other, with all the gradations of anger from the peevish Pshaw, excited by a pin put in the wrong way—to the exclamation of ire produced by the breaking of a lace pulled too tightly, or an ornament becoming untacked—an exclamation, alas! which sometimes partakes of the character, though not of the form, of an oath, from the lips of many a pretty dressee.

Many a gentleman would, I believe, entertain a very different opinion of the temper of the fair partner whom he sees all smiles at a quadrille, could he have beheld her preparing for her party. But the toilet is certainly a sad trial of temper, even to the most philosophical and the best-tempered; and when its importance is considered, it is scarcely to be wondered at:—for what would half the sex be without it?

And then ladies'-maids are so stupid, and the

pins of the present day so inferior, and mantua-makers so tiresome, and glasses so disfiguring, that no wonder the best temper in the world should be spoiled, or the prettiest lips and eyes in the world glow, and put themselves in a passion! Well, were I a man, and that I am not nobody can be sure—but were I a man and in love, having seen what I have seen, I would bribe my mistress's maid to let me be once a witness to the toilet operation, when it was undertaken with a particular wish to please, or to outshine any particular person.—I would moreover wish her to be particularly stupid on that day, and if my charmer's temper stood this test, I should be quite satisfied of its permanent sweetness.

Ladies, think of the half hour which elapses between the dressing and dinner bells, and confess that I am right. .

At length the toilet is finished—the plumes and trains arranged to admiration—every thing complete, and blazing with diamonds; they enter the carriage at one o'clock—away they roll

—dash down to Piccadilly, and get into the line at the top of St. James's Street.

If the reader was never in St. James's Street on a drawing-room day, let him, or her, not fail going on the next, for it is really a sight worth seeing—not merely for the ladies and gentlemen who are rolling in their elegant equipages to be partakers of the splendid scene, and to pay their respects to his Majesty, who, “ God save the mark,” wishes more than one-half of them, where I must not mention—but for the crowds of gaping, wondering faces that fill the streets, and the balconies, and the windows, from the shops to the attics.

Here, ranged one above the other, all crowding to get the best view of the plumed heads that are passing, may be seen all sorts of people, from the lowest to the upper class of the middling rank of life, all dressed out too in their best—the women smiling, and wondering, and admiring; and the men smirking, and bowing, and flirting, and pretending to point out the different big-wigs, male and female,

as they pass: having become acquainted with their faces by watching the calling of the carriages at the opera, which, by the bye, is no bad lesson in the vocabulary of names and knowledge of persons of fashion.

But though they all seem delighted to admire the beauty, and fashion, and dress, of the court-goers, how much envy, and sulkiness, and dissatisfaction, does not the contemplation create!—How many hearts are there that beat with all the tumult of ungratified wishes to have been born one of the noble and rich, who excite their envy; and how many of them go home dissatisfied, with what the Catechism denominates “that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them!”

Poor short-sighted mortals!—as though a diamond stomacher could defend the heart from a pang of sorrow, or a coronet cure a head-ache!

We are too apt to judge of others only by what we see, without considering that by what we permit to be seen of ourselves, we may appear to be objects of envy to others, while we feel that did we unfold ALL that we

know of our inward minds and sufferings; that there is more occasion for pity than for envy.

Depend upon it, the goods and ills of society are far more equally distributed among us, than we are willing to acknowledge; but that devilish propensity of our nature to neglect what we have, and to covet that which we have not, will always keep the human heart in a turmoil that will ever prevent it from being easy.

The truest philosophy, when we are inclined to envy a man for his riches, is to immediately imagine him to be subject to the gout, which prevents his enjoyment of them.—If we envy a woman for the possession of a gay dashing husband, immediately picture to yourself the thousand temptations to infidelity; and that she is so jealous, as never to have a moment's peace.—If we envy a viscount, or a countess, be immediately sure that they have hearts burning with vexation, because the one is not a marquis, or the other a duchess; and if we envy the beauty of a complexion, or the smoothness of a skin, think of the dread the

possessor must have of the small-pox, and of old age; and above all, if we are inclined to envy all these things, think in how short a time one tyrant brings every thing to the same level; and that there is no fortune, however large—no rank, however exalted—no pleasure, however piquant no happiness, however pure—no complexion, however blooming, but must be one day lost in the narrow compass of the grave!

“ Invidious grave !—How dost thou rend in sunder
Whom love has knit, and sympathy made one !
Dull grave ! thou spoilst the dance of youthful blood,
Strik'st out the dimple from the cheek of mirth,
And every smirking feature from the face.”

And with this reflection let us go to the drawing-room.

The carriage got into the line at the top of St. James's Street, and here there was no more rolling along at the rate of ten miles an hour. Instead of this rapid motion, their progress was rather about a yard in five minutes; but the slower the carriage moved, the greater the gratification of the spectators and the gratified vanity of the *spectatees*. For here, and what

male dares deny it? begin the pleasures of the drawing-room.—It is so sweet a thing to excite envy and admiration!

At the balconies in the club-houses were a few of that class of society, who were entitled to “nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,” kissing of hands, and shaking of handkerchiefs, from the plumed and flounced inmates of the carriages. The officers on guard too, rode for some little distance by the sides of such carriages as contained their friends; but as for all the rest—all those perched on shop-fronts, or hanging their heads out of window like chickens in a coop, or straining their necks over parapets—and the houses really looked living with people, and St. James’s Street itself to be walking with them—they were all *canaille*, and only made to gape and wonder, as the others imagined themselves created to be gaped and wondered at.

During the stoppage of the carriages, Lady Pomeroy renewed all her previous instructions about slipping through the crowd, so as to avoid the demolition of their dresses; for such acci-

dents often occur amidst the pushing even of such an elegant crowd as that of the drawing-room. How to drop their train to be marshalled by the wands of the pages—and the precise time to take off their gloves; and, in short, all the minutiae which formed Lady Pomeroy's code of elegant breeding.

At length the carriage drove up to Buckingham House; the two tall footmen were in a moment at the door of the carriage—down went the steps—and out marched Lady Pomeroy to head her little procession.

She had scarcely entered, when a short stout man in a white hat, which he did not take off, hurried up to her, exclaiming, “ Lord! Lord! my Lady Pomeroy, how could you come so late?—with two presentations too! Vy, my Lady, I thought you knew better—such an old bird as you are at these here things.”

“ Oh! dear Mr. Townshend, don't scold me; I trust, with your assistance, we shall be in very good time,” said Lady Pomeroy.

“ Time indeed!—time!—you should have been here two hours ago—but here—here's my arm!

Young ladies, keep close behind us. I've just been a-scolding the young Duchess of Daintree for being so very late. But come along—come along—better late nor never does not do here.” And the little officious bustling man, with his sharp blue eyes and white eye-brows, light-blue coat and nankeen breeches, hurried on Lady Pomeroy and her nieces to the first apartment, where, suddenly quitting them, he started after a person in a court-dress, whom he had actually seen pick a pocket. A sword, bag, and steel buttons, could not conceal the disguised *prig*, as our police-patriarch elegantly called him, from his accustomed eye. He was therefore quickly transferred to a hackney-coach with two of Townshend's myrmidons, while he himself bustled back from the pick-pocket to assist women of fashion into the palace, exclaiming, “Oh dear! what with the pickpockets and people of fashion, I don't know *which* is the *vorst*!”

Lady Pomeroy and her nieces had scarcely entered the first room, and were looking about for some acquaintance, when, hurrying back

from the commencement of the crowd, came Charles Trevor.

Agnes' eyes sparkled, and her cheeks became suffused at the sight of him ; she thought him on the Continent. It was upwards of three years since they had met, and their looks testified, that three years had brought with it personal improvement to both of them.

" Miss Fleming !" exclaimed he, " I am delighted. What ! going to be presented ? Pray let me have the pleasure of writing your cards.—Lady Pomeroy, I presume ? Pray, Ma'am, let old grudges be forgotten, and condescend to let a Trevor be your cavalier through this crowd, which is really almost impenetrable ; and if I may judge by my sides, none of the politest in the use of their elbows."

" Mr. Trevor ?" exclaimed Lady Pomeroy, coldly. Agnes looked at her beseechingly ; Amelia's face never changed its expression.

" Yes, Ma'am, the same—the same, whom you knew as a boy at Brighton—when I had the honour to dance with Miss Fleming."

" Miss *Agnes* Fleming, if you please, Sir—I

remember. But surely you must have a very tenacious memory!" Just then, luckily for Trevor, Mrs. Dashington's school, and Agnes, there came such an influx of company, literally nearly rushing past them, that if it had not been for Trevor's protecting arm, Lady Pomeroy would have been absolutely hurried into the crowd that was making its way towards the presence, without either her cards or her nieces.

Trevor took advantage of this—seized the pen and the cards, and wrote "Miss Fleming, presented by Lady Pomeroy," "Miss Agnes Fleming, presented by Lady Pomeroy." Duplicates of these were as quickly made and thrown upon the table; each young lady took the one designed for her. Trevor, in spite of a slight resistance, drew one of Lady Pomeroy's arms within his, while the other held her train, and they took their places at the back of the crowd.

A number of young men who were loitering that they might lose no part of the scene of confusion, for such is every part of the palace on a drawing-room day, excepting the presence

chamber and those immediately adjoining, called out after Trevor, but he heeded them not.

They were now fairly in the crowd; new comers had closed them in, and were pushing from behind, which the struggles of those before to take care of their dresses, and to steer clear of the swords and of the wigs of dignitaries of the church and the law, which were here and there seen like cauliflowers in the crowd, made a mob at Buckingham House very similar to a mob any where else.

These struggles were still more vehement at the approach to any of the doorways, to the narrow spaces of which the people who had occupied a whole room, were obliged to contract themselves to gain a passage to another.

Here Trevor's arm was of great use, and Lady Pomeroy ceased to regret that she had been obliged to him, when she felt the conveniences of passage which his strength and attentions obtained for her and her *protégées* at these perilous passages; for very perilous they were to flounces, feathers, and festoons.

Many ladies were near fainting in these door-

ways, and excited the compassion of Agnes, in spite of the difficulties of her own progress; though she could scarcely forbear laughing, when she saw the plump face of a short round-about lady actually buried "eyes, nose, and mouth," as children say of the moon, in the full-bottomed wig of a short dumpling D. D., who had been thrust back upon her by some sudden reaction of the crowd.

At length, however, they came to a door where their further progress was stopped by the crossed halberds of the gentlemen-pensioners who lined the apartment into which the door led.

Here was the beginning of the appearance of a court—here things were conducted with some of that order, which should certainly characterise the admission of the subject to the presence of the sovereign; and here our party had time to breathe, and to feel some return of that trepidation with which so many young hearts beat on their first presentation.

Lady Pomeroy gave a hasty look at her nieces as they entered this last room, when the

halberds were for a moment withdrawn to admit those nearest the door, and Trevor found more favour in her eyes when she saw that their dresses were much less discomposed than those of many of the others, through the exertions he had made in piloting them through the crowd—"Take off your gloves—let go your train, Ma'am," was heard uttered to those immediately before them. Amelia obeyed like an automaton; but the heart of Agnes leaped to her throat with a mingled sensation of fear and loyalty, as she caught a first glimpse of that court, in the midst of which she saw a monarch whom she had been trained to love, and whose presence and kindness she had never forgotten at the juvenile ball at Brighton.

Their trains dropped—they moved forward, while the attentive pages arranged the half-acres of satin which swept gracefully behind them.

Amelia moved with her accustomed ease. Lady Pomeroy's heart glowed with pride as she saw her bend and rise gracefully as she passed the King; and it was lucky, that in this

admiration of her sister, she did not perceive the agitation which Agnes had great difficulty to conceal.

Agnes had no eye for the moment for any but the monarch, surrounded as he was by all the heroes and statesmen of the age. They were all unregarded; her whole soul seemed swallowed up with a feeling of loyalty and affection that almost overpowered her. This feeling was plainly depicted in her rising colour and panting bosom; and she felt then that sensation which in the other sex makes the patriot and the hero.

How indefinable is this feeling, which is inspired by the presence of royalty! Knox felt it on his first introduction to Mary. Those who sacrificed Charles the First on the scaffold were never free from its influence. Lewis the Sixteenth's presence could animate a whole assembly of the people into shouts of loyalty, though among those people were numbered those who were so shortly to be his murderers.

Agnes did not recover her self-command till she got out of the presence chamber; but

when she first arrived at the top of the staircase, and looked down over the balustrade into the hall, she was delighted at the splendid *coup d'œil* that presented itself.

It was here that the splendour of the English court was to be appreciated; a splendour not arising solely from dress and decoration, but from the really fine persons of most of those who compose it.

Foreign courts may outstrip the English in tinsel, and diamonds, and brilliancy, but there is no court in Europe that can exhibit such a number of fine young men and handsome women as ours.

From the gallery Agnes took a survey of the whole scene below, which the blaze of diamonds, glitter of stars, nodding of plumes, and mixture of military with civil costumes sparkling with gold and silver, rendered almost a realisation of some enchantment.

There ladies having recovered from the pressure of the crowd, had leisure for all the "How d'ye dos" of recognition; and to laugh "at the dangers they had passed." Trevor still

continued with Lady Pomeroy, in spite of the grave looks and assurances that she was "quite ashamed to trouble him any more." He was too much accustomed, however, to slight any hints that were not exceeding broad ones, to be put off easily; so he went rattling on about his tour, and what he had seen abroad, and drew a comparison between the Spanish, French, and English courts; and in short, rendered himself entertaining, till "Lady Pomeroy's carriage stops the way," hurried them down into the hall, and through the corridor, lest it should be sent on by the police before they could reach the door, in which case Lady Pomeroy, by sad experience, knew that they might have to walk a quarter of a mile to get to it, or be detained for hours till it should again come round in rotation. It was at such times as these that she envied those who had the *entrée*, a privilege which no riches could procure her.

Trevor saw them to their carriage, saying every thing he could to procure even a distant invitation from Lady Pomeroy; but all in vain.

It was useless hinting where hints were not intended to be taken. Trevor was therefore at last obliged in saying "Adieu," to add, "that of course he should feel it his duty to call in Grosvenor Square, to inquire after them."

A cold bow from Lady Pomeroy was immediately followed by drawing up the glass. "Drive on, coachman," exclaimed the police man—away flew the horses—and home went the two heroines to undress, and lay aside all their drawing-room paraphernalia, except their tiaras and feathers, which were to be again exhibited in Lady Pomeroy's box at the Opera.

The tiaras and feathers, however, were not their only accompaniments in the opera-box: for Trevor took his place beside them, and in spite of the cold looks of Lady Pomeroy, kept his station through the whole of the opera and ballet; elbowed his way with them along the lobby into the concert-room, called their carriage, and in fact did every thing in the world to be civil to and amuse Lady Pomeroy, who

on their way home, could not help expressing that they were really very much obliged to Mr. Trevor ; to which she added, “ And it is a pity he is a younger brother.”

CHAPTER XVI.

MATRIMONY.

But marriage is a matter of more worth,
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship.

SHAKESPEARE.

THERE are few events in our short passage through this life that are more contemplated by ~~persons of both sexes~~, or anticipated with greater eagerness, or which produce more bitter or sweeter results, than marriage. Marriage, the end of love ; and, alas ! in how many instances is this end attained ?

Love is the subject of the poet—Marriage of the philosopher ; the one creates a

thousand imaginary blisses, which it is the province of the other to destroy; and yet with thousands of examples before our eyes of the variety of miseries which this connexion produces, unless all the judgment as well as the affections of our nature is exerted in its formation, how many do we see daily and hourly making the desperate plunge, without exerting the foresight of Æsop's frog, of looking into the well before taking the leap. But even Æsop's frog might get out of the well again. But in matrimony, it is *vestigia nulla retrorsum*, and therefore both sexes should look well into the matter before they embark in it, and ascertain what are the real causes which induce them to commit matrimony.

Men should ascertain whether they stand most in need of a wife, an heiress, or a nurse; and whether it is their passions, their wants, or their infirmities, that induce them to wed; and women should ask themselves whether it is a husband, an establishment, or rank, that makes them trust their persons and liberties to the guardianship of a man. In short, both

should know, according to the epigram, whether they are candidates for the state, *propter opus*, *opes*, or *open*.

Would people put these questions to themselves before they go to the altar instead of after it, when they thrust themselves into the mind perforce, and will be answered, I am inclined to think there would not be so many miserable families, nor so much business for Doctors' Commons. A timely understanding of the motives that lead to the altar, would prevent many heart-breaking disappointments, which are often deplorable, often ridiculous, and always remediless. In Mr. Fleming's family, there were almost as many different opinions upon the subject of marriage, as there were persons. His own ideas were entirely confined to his own ambitious projects: as he had himself married entirely for the purpose of connecting himself with people of rank, all his wishes with regard to his daughters had the same end in view. Lady Pomeroy's inclinations were much of the same nature, only that she wished to be the match-maker, and had no idea of either of

her nieces choosing for themselves. Amelia's destiny was fixed, as far as the determinations of her father and aunt were concerned; and she was precisely the character to render a compliance with their wishes easy. But Agnes had very different ideas: she had thought for herself—and what was more, had felt for herself; and all these thoughts and feelings had been buoyed up by the nature of her reading. Agnes had lived in poetry, and she felt poetically; being far removed by fortune from the common occupations of life, and in a station which brought her very little in contact with the vulgar realities of existence, she imagined a world of her own, and anticipated a long series of years of happiness, flowing from the kindest feelings of human nature, from love, friendship, and that intercourse of heart, soul, and mind, which look so pretty upon paper, and which sound so sweetly in the numbers of the poet; but which, alas! are as far removed from reality, as the *Damons* and *Daphnes* of Virgil, and other pastoralists, with their pipes and crooks, are from the clodhopping hob-nailed

Toms, Jacks, and Wills, who drive our pigs to market; and the coarse blousabella Bettys, Sallys, and Winifreds, who milk our cows. and churn our butter and cheese.

She had a kind of romantic feeling of the duration of first impressions, and fell into that very common error, that first love is always the strongest and the purest: that it may be the purest is much more likely than that it is the strongest; since at the period of life that it is generally experienced, our passions are purer, because they have not attained their maturity; as infancy is always more innocent than manhood. But that first love is or can be the strongest, if felt in early youth, I much doubt, for the heart has not yet learned the strength of its own feelings. Passion, like every thing else, must grow more powerful by experience, and must be stronger in the full maturity of life than at its commencement.

Agnes, however, could not think so—she was young—she had been pleased—and she thought she loved; and it was agreeably to all her received and cherished notions, that the object of

this love should be the youth whom she had first distinguished. Perhaps, too, her love for Lady Emily had encouraged this feeling in no small degree; and Trevor being a remarkably fine young man, with showy talent and a great flow of animal spirits, a closer acquaintance was not likely to change these feelings in his favour. There was another thing that also worked powerfully for him in her mind; and this was Lady Pomeroy's prejudice against him. Her independent mind naturally revolted against any thing that in the slightest degree savoured of injustice, and her heart always espoused the cause of those whom she considered its victims. Agnes had only seen Trevor in those moments when he had appeared amiable—she recollected with gratitude and pleasure the attentions which he had paid her when a boy—and when he came to her as a fine young man, with a soldier's laurels round his brows, and came too as the brother of her dearest friend, it was no wonder that gratitude and pleasure should increase to something warmer; and this being the first sensation of the kind, no wonder she gave to

it the character of that all-engrossing passion which she had so often pictured in her imagination. Trevor, too, was a passionate and persevering lover: Lady Pomeroy's opposition had acted upon his mind precisely in the same manner in which it had stimulated Agnes, and had made him determine to succeed.

Agnes had thus known him as a boy, and knew him as a man; but she had not known him between these epochs. She had heard indeed of his gallant conduct in the field: she knew his progress from cornet to lieutenant, from lieutenant to captain, and from captain to major; and all this told well for him. But she knew nothing of the progress of his mind and heart during this period; she knew nothing of the development of his character; she knew how he had lived publicly, but she was utterly ignorant of his private conduct. She knew the direction-posts and mile-stones that marked his career; but she was utterly ignorant of the scenery between them. She recollected him an engaging boy—she had heard of him as a gallant soldier, and she received him as a passionate

lover, and the brother of that friend whom she considered that it would be happiness to call sister; and with all these reflections she gave herself up to the delicious dream of first love, and imagined for Trevor the perfections which he certainly did not possess. And what girl of her age has not done the same?

The determined friendship of Agnes for Lady Emily, and the dislike Mr. Fleming had to offend any person of family, had made her nearly a constant visitor in his house in spite of Lady Pomeroy; and thus Trevor, as her brother, naturally also found a footing, though the old Lady kept a very watchful eye upon his conduct: for she was determined that the immense fortunes which both her nieces would have, should never go to support a younger brother, and particularly the cadet of a family, the head of which had formerly offended her pride.

Agnes was too open-hearted, and lived too much on the surface, to enable her to conceal her partiality from such prying eyes; and the consequence was, many a smart discussion upon

matrimony, and its prudences and imprudences : in which Lady Pomeroy tried in vain to make a convert of her lively niece to her own principles.

Many a lecture did the old Lady read to the three young ladies as they passed their mornings in their boudoir ; and many and fierce were the arguments she used against marriages of mere inclination. But she might have argued and inveighed till doomsday, before she could have changed the notions of Agnes on this interesting subject.

One morning, as usual, something had given rise to their usual discussion. Either what Agnes had said, or something that Lady Emily had just read aloud, made Lady Pomeroy exclaim :—

“ Well, well, I wish marriages were made here as they are in France ; there they are sensible people, and the parents choose for their children, as they ought to do everywhere, and for the best of reasons ; namely, their experience, their knowledge of the world, and of what was best for their children. There the young

people had nothing to do with it but to obey their relations, who were not to be misled by love and such nonsense."

"And that, perhaps, my dear aunt," replied Agnes, "is the very reason why there are no such words as home and comfort in the French language. Indeed, there is no necessity for words to describe things which do not exist; and how can home and domestic comfort exist, when those who are to form and enjoy them are brought together without the very essence from which they must derive their existence—mutual affection?"

"Mutual nonsense, my dear; do you think Sir Everard Pomeroy and myself should ever have led such happy lives, if we had married for no other motives than those? or do you think the poor man would have been able to settle such a jointure upon me, and left such a fortune behind him, if we had depended upon mutual affection? I tell you, girls, it is mutual convenience that should lead to marriage; and that a young woman loses her dignity, who does not think of her establishment when she is thinking of matrimony; and depend upon it,

that marriages of this sort are generally much more happy than your love matches."

" I quite agree with my aunt," said Amelia, in her affected voice: " prudence is a far surer guide than passion in the choice of a matrimonial establishment."

" Good girl !" said Lady Pomeroy: " you *are* prudent, Amelia."

" For my part," exclaimed Agnes, " if marriages are to be formed upon such principles, and upon such feelings,—if we may dignify mere mercenary interests with such a term; then why do they mention the name of love in the proceeding? What has love to do with the dirty acres, and paltry ore, and long parchments, which you would persuade me are absolutely necessary to render a marriage happy?—If such is the case, why should not a gentleman make love with his settlement in his hand, and save himself a world of trouble in fine speeches, which mean nothing when they come not from the heart, by laying the parchment at her feet, and saying, There, Ma'am; there are my claims to you as a wife?"

“ Oh ! ” interrupted Emily, who observed the gathering frowns on the brows of Lady Pomeroy and Mr. Fleming, “ but recollect, dearest Agnes, riches, or rather competency, and comfort, are not at all incompatible even with your ideas of love ; wealth and rank do not necessarily indurate the heart, or banish the warmer and better and dearer feelings of our nature.”

“ I dare say not,” replied Agnes : “ I have no doubt there are as good and as warm hearts beneath brilliant stars, and red ribands, and diamond stomachers, as there are under the undecorated garbs of rustics and citizens :—I am contending against the principle of uniting people’s estates instead of themselves—the principle of pairing, not matching. Why, my dear Emily, what would you think of a man who proposed for you merely because a portion of your estate interrupted the prospects of his manor-house, or because a few of your thousands were necessary to disencumber his acres—who thinks more of your personal property than your personal attractions, and appreciates the good-

ness of your land more than the goodness of your heart? For my part, when such marriages are projected, I would waive all the ceremony of love-making; I would forbear to profane all the sacred words which must necessarily form a portion of a lover's proposal. Instead of introducing Mr. Augustus so and so to Lady Emily so and so, I would merely say, 'Permit me to introduce so much 3 per cent Consols to so much Long Annuity; or so many acres in Bedfordshire to so many of the same quality in Bucks.' Instead of saying he has a good heart, I would have them say he has a good house. I would have them visit each other's mansions and establishments, instead of each other; inspect the rent-roll, instead of the feelings of the parties; and let the marriage ceremony be executed like a conveyance, and given under their hands and seals, with two good attesting witnesses. A perfect understanding of each other's estates is all that is necessary on such occasions — 'hands and not hearts,' as my favourite Shakspeare has it."

"Ay, Agnes, there it is!" said Mr. Fleming.

“It is your poetry spoils you :—you can find an apology for all your odd feelings in the fancies of those who spent their whole lives in imaginary scenes of their own creation, instead of the realities of life. For my part, I see no common sense in any of their productions, and think they ought to be excluded from society for the mischief they do young women. People of fashion should have nothing to do with poetry.”

“True,” my dear papa, “and poetry has certainly very little to do with them. But I confess—nay, now, don’t frown me down—I confess, I would not give up the poetry of life for all its dull and sober realities. I would not barter the imaginings of my own mind—the bright anticipations of future existence in a union of hearts, and my own ideas of love, friendship, and marriage—poetical ideas, if you please—for all that rank or wealth could give in the most splendid establishment that you could propose. Would you, Emily?” said she, turning her enthusiastic face, lighted up with the energy of her argument, to her friend.

“I certainly would not sacrifice the feelings

of my heart for wealth or rank, I certainly would not marry a man with every requisite in the world to make him a good husband——”

“According to my aunt’s ideas of a good husband, you mean,” interrupted Agnes.

“According to my own,” rejoined Emily, “unless I loved him.”

“There’s my own dear Emily—I knew you would be on my side. I knew love, and feeling, and enthusiasm, and poetry, would find an advocate in you.”

“Not so fast, my dear Agnes; for though I would certainly not sacrifice my feelings for the most advantageous marriage in the world, I would yet never permit my heart to be betrayed into one to which the ideas of imprudence could attach.”

“Oh dear, dear!” exclaimed Agnes, impatiently, “there you have spoiled all; your buts, and your doubts, and your qualifications of your sentiments, come like wintry clouds upon a sunbeam—like snow upon a rose—or like pouring water into champagne: and so you would have a lover calculate income, and rent and

taxes, and servants' wages, and the keep of horses, before he makes his proposal; you would have him say with the man in the farce, ' I think once, I think twice, I think three times, that I love you.' "

" Well, and would not that be better than if he were only to think once, and say so, and find that his second thoughts contradicted it?" retorted Lady Emily.

" I really don't know: I love a warm heart; I cannot bear your cold calculating lovers, who, in proposing an elopement, consider how much posting is per mile, and who speak upon feeling and passion as upon a rule of arithmetic."

" And so they ought," rejoined Mr. Fleming; " and if every body did so, we should not have so many ruined establishments—so many estates put out to nurse—so many noble persons compelled to emigrate to the continent for cheapness; depend upon it, Agnes, that marriage should be considered like the Rule of Three."

" Oh stop, for heaven's sake! my dear papa;" for if you are right, I should exclaim with the children, ' The Rule of Three does puzzle me,

and Practice makes me mad;' so pray, dear Emily, come to my assistance, and do not let me be alone in an argument against the arithmetic of papa, the proprieties of my aunt, and the prudences of Amelia; for all three will soon beat me out of the field; and I shall be compelled to acknowledge that a rent-roll and pedigree are better accompaniments to a lover than a sword and a lance—an equipage, better than a loving heart—a good jointure preferable to an ardent passion—and worldly advantages better than such a match of love as that which the old play describes, where the husband's prayer is,

'To beg one hour of death—that neither she,
With widow's tears, may live to bury him,
Nor, weeping, he, with wither'd arms, may bear
His breathless helpmate to the sepulchre.'

"And so it is," pursued Lady Pomeroy, whose ears were naturally attracted by the word jointures; "for when the passion is gone, the jointure remains—ay, and—" she stopped.

"And when the husband is gone too—*eh!* aunt—is it not so?" asked Agnes, smilingly.

“Pshaw!” exclaimed the incensed lady, as she saw a smile play even around the lips of Mr. Fleming, at this sally of Agnes.

“Brother, brother! you spoil the girl; and permit her to take too much after her mother.”

This was a word that always struck upon the tenderest chord of the heart of Agnes; the smiles vanished in a moment—a tear softened the brilliancy of her fine eyes—and, with a faltering, though indignant voice, she exclaimed—

“Oh that I could resemble her!—Oh that I could be all that she was!—If God grant me but to be like my sainted mother—like what I remember her in tenderness and feeling—like what I have been told she was in talent and understanding; my utmost ambition would indeed be gratified, and I should feel that I had indeed a treasure to confer upon a husband.”

The energy with which Agnes had uttered these words—the silence which immediately succeeded it—all spoke the quick transition of her feelings. Her mind was turned in one moment from all the light playfulness of her

preceding conversation to thoughts of deep and melancholy interest. Love, marriage, gaiety, happiness, seemed all absorbed in her recollection of her mother. All the caresses of that dearly beloved and tenderly remembered parent came upon her mind; the convulsive pressure of her last embrace—the night she had passed in tears and sleep upon her senseless corpse, were all at once conjured up in her vivid imagination; and thus was Agnes always the creature of impulse, swayed by her feelings of the moment; merry and melancholy by turns, her mind and feelings seemed to partake of the nature of the chameleon, and took their colour from the objects which were presented to her heart and imagination.

It was the foresight of this disposition that rendered her mother so anxious for her future welfare:—it was this knowledge of her ardent and easily-excited feelings, that made her the principal object of her care on the bed of death; and it was the regulation of these feelings to which, had she lived, she would have directed all her maternal attention.

CHAPTER XVII.

A YEAR AND A DAY.

The world's a scene of changes.
COWLEY.

IN the most romantic history there must be mere matters of fact untinged by the least shade of romance, and so it must be with ours ; for it has been truly said that the great sum of human life—the great accounts of happiness and misery—are made up of trifles. In short, to speak more plainly, a long life is like a tailor's or a lawyer's bill, there is a great sum

total at the end, made up of very insignificant items in its progress.

The history of the lives of most people, are included in their births, marriages, and deaths. The only biographer the generality of human beings deserve, is the journalist; and the whole story of their lives is contained in the paragraphs which record the above events.

How seldom, in perusing these daily records of births, marriages, and deaths, which the newspapers contain, do we ever calculate on the importance of the events recorded to the persons themselves! How seldom do we think, when reading the paragraph that announces the birth of an infant son, that there is another being thrown into the world, at all events to struggle through its difficulties, perhaps to regulate its destinies! or of a daughter, that there is another victim to be added to the many—many—many—who have been and are daily immolated at the shrine of licentious passion! When we read of a marriage, how little do we know of the heart-burnings and breakings that it may occasion! of the violations of filial duty

which have preceded it ! or think of that violation of the conjugal ones which it may produce ! and when we read of death after death in the daily obituary, how few of us are there that say to ourselves, There is another and another soul gone to its last account !—

“ To that bourne from whence no traveller returns,”

to answer for all the actions of a long life passed in the midst of temptations, and passions, and pains, and pleasures, to which the event recorded in the carelessly-penned paragraph has put an end, and opened to the ethereal and undying spirit a new existence ? Yet still all these events must take place in a common as well as in a romantic life ; and thus it was in the family of our two heroines during the year and a day of which it is the province of this chapter to give the history.

A character, with some determined propensity to vice of its own, is not half so dangerous ; half so little to be depended upon, as that vacillating temper, which is led away by the imitation

of others ; and which, chameleon like, takes its colours from those by which it is surrounded.

In the one instance, a man is only misled by his own vice ; in the other, by the vices of many, pursuing them all by turns.

Such a character was Trevor's : with no decided propensity to any particular vice, he was completely led by those with whom he lived. " Infirm of purpose," with a great dread of ridicule, mixed with a strong passion for pleasure, he was a complete *girouette*, subject to the variation of every passing wind.

At Eton and at Oxford he had imitated the follies of others. He went to the Peninsula, because every young man of rank had done the same thing. He travelled, after the peace, because he found some of his old comrades had determined on making the tour of Europe : and he indulged in all the vices of all the capitals he passed through, first, to imitate the set with which he lived ; and secondly, to escape the ridicule with which any qualm of conscience would inevitably have been visited.

In some of the places where he had stopped

in Italy, he had renewed his acquaintance with the Honourable Baronet who had cut such a conspicuous figure in the elopement; the history of which was given in our Chapter XV; and, like every one else who had ever been fascinated into his society, Trevor could not resist its influence, and had been the participator in a number of intrigues, in Rome, Florence, and Naples; until his separation from such a dangerous companion, and a command from his relations at home, had withdrawn him from the dissipation of the continent, and compelled his return to England.

During this period, he had been a partner, or more properly a follower, in many of the wild adventures of our hero; and had been present at, and the witness of, a bet which had been made by him, that within a year he would enter again into London society, and be as well received and as paramount as ever. He had not, however, yet attempted the decision of this wager.

The sight of Agnes (though it did not recall the feelings of his boyish days, for those had

long since become extinct, and were nearly forgotten) inspired Trevor with a new passion, which he was fain to persuade himself and her was the continuance of his early love ; and he thus presented himself to one who was already prepossessed in his favour, with the additional recommendation of a constancy which, in modern days, both Agnes and her friend Lady Emily decided to be astonishing.

Ignorant how the intervening years had been spent by him, they were neither of them aware of the dangerous tendencies of his character ; and though Lady Emily knew something of the vacillation which proved so conspicuous an element of its composition, she thought that the beauty and virtues of her friend would be the best remedy for this defect.

Agnes was indeed all that man could desire in woman ; with a person formed in nature's finest mould ; a temper in which sweetness was blended with dignity ; and a heart open as the day, with eyes and lips that wept at woe or laughed at merriment. Agnes presented a

specimen of the sex, which the proudest man might be proud to have called his own.

Trevor saw and was completely conquered ; and with the usual vacillation of his character, every dissipation was immediately given up ; he thought himself for about the fiftieth time inspired by a passion which was to last for ever ; and so he swore it would, both to Agnes herself and to his sister, whom he found a very useful ally in his pursuit.

The habit of thinking of him, the recollections of their early intercourse, a prejudiced idea of the strength and never-ending influence of a first love, were all favourable things for Trevor in the mind and head of Agnes ; and, unfortunately, the Argus eyes of Lady Pomeroy prevented her from forming any other estimate of Trevor's character, than such as she could obtain from short and hurried interviews in mixed society—in assemblies—or at the Opera ; and in them he was well calculated to shine, as he had a great gift of small-talk ; had read much poetry ; could descant plausibly on various

subjects; and had, undoubtedly, seen a great deal of the world. Added to this, he was really passionately in love; and love, we all know, will turn dulness into eloquence, to the ear and heart that are prepossessed in favour of the speaker.

Had Lady Pomeroy permitted that unrestrained intercourse between Agnes and Trevor which his sister's intimacy with her might have sanctioned, it is very probable that her penetration might have developed his real character, and thus the danger Lady Pomeroy dreaded, have been avoided; or perhaps the passion of Trevor himself, unfed by opposition, might, with the usual volatility of his character, have gradually subsided, or given place to some new feeling for some other beauty.

While however they met each other so seldom, she never saw him but with his mind and heart in their holiday dress; and never hearing of him excepting through the medium of his partial sister, she became acquainted only with the favourable parts of his character.

Besides, Trevor knew well how to express his passion; he could talk of love, and feeling, and sentiment: could picture domestic happiness; descant on the intercourse of souls; and converse on all the secret sympathies of the human heart. In short, he was well versed in all the hacknied language of passion, which never appears nonsensical, even to the most penetrating, when the heart is first giving way to the impressions of love.

Trevor thus only presented an outline of his character to Agnes, which her vivid imagination unfortunately filled up with every trait she wished him to possess; and she thus became enamoured with the creature of her own imagination—with what she wished Trevor to be, rather than with what he actually was.

This feeling in such a heart as that of Agnes was rather increased than diminished, by the opposition which he met with from Lady Pomeroiy and her father. His being a younger brother, and entirely dependent on the kindness of his relatives and his profession of arms for his income, gave him, in her eyes, an additional

claim to her affection. Her generous spirit revolted from such grovelling ideas: wealth and station never found an advocate in her bosom; and she annoyed both her father and Lady Pomeroy by the frequent disregard of all that they considered desirable in life—rank and etiquette.

Indeed, this was the principal, perhaps the only fault in her character; for conscious rectitude made her so completely regardless of mere punctilio and form, that she was too apt to display an independence of opinion in her remarks which is far from being a pleasing, and is always a very dangerous trait in the character of a young woman.

It was in vain that coronet after coronet was laid at her feet, either by the declarations of their possessors themselves, or through the medium of Lady Pomeroy and her father. It was in vain that the advantages of rank, the extent of jointure, the splendour of establishments, were talked of. Agnes turned a deaf ear to every proposal. She pitied and was silent over the one or two instances of true love which she

regretted to have inspired, because they could only create unhappiness; but she ridiculed and triumphed over the many who sought her only on account of the Consols, India bonds, Exchequer bills, and ready cash, which it was well known would be the portion of either of Mr. Fleming's lovely daughters.

From the moment they came out, Amelia and Agnes had become the mark of all the manœuvring mammas who had sons to marry; and to all the young and dissolute noblemen, who wished for Mr. Fleming's gold to repair the depredations which profligacy and extravagance had made in their estates.

Lady Pomeroy, however, having very early made known the destination of Amelia, Agnes became alone the object of these pursuits; and a very few months were sufficient to disgust her with the selfishness and the indelicacy with which they were prosecuted, as well as with the envy and rancour of those who would consider her as a rival, in spite of all that she could do to prove the contrary. Every refusal was attributed to pride and ambition, and to her wish for

a husband of superior rank to any that had yet offered.

The effects created in Agnes' mind during these few months, served greatly to confirm her heart in its original sentiments. She saw too much of *her* world to respect its opinions, and every day added some argument in favour of her own predilection for feeling in preference to form, and continued her in that independence of mind which had so early been one of her principal characteristics.

Wherever talent or genius of any kind existed, no matter the rank or the station of its possessor, it was sure to find a patroness in Agnes; and many were the severe lessons she received from her aunt and father for giving her attention to some poor poet or player, whose talent had made him a path into society; while lordlings were, by dozens, waiting for the smiles which she so lavishly bestowed on the efforts of genius.

In the mean time, her feelings in favour of Trevor gained a more decided ground as she perceived the evident injustice done him by

Lady Pomeroy. Trevor himself felt this; and it only increased his determination to succeed; for he was a very obstinate man sometimes, and to tell him he should not do a thing, was very frequently only giving him an additional incitement to its accomplishment. He likewise enjoyed the evident and sometimes ludicrous distress his presence occasioned the old lady, and very naturally felt vain of the decided preference which Agnes gave him over all her other admirers.

It was with Lady Emily, however, only, that Agnes conversed on this subject; and they both quite agreed, that though she had a right to refuse to listen to any other proposals, it was clear that she ought not to act in opposition to her father's wishes, on a point so important. As to the wishes of Lady Pomeroy, as Agnes perfectly well knew why they were indulged, she honestly confessed that they had no weight with her; to the old lady's great annoyance, therefore, wherever they appeared, Trevor was sure to appear also. At Howell and James'; he was sure to be loitering down the street just

at the moment to put them into their carriage. In the Park, his horse could never get beyond the side of their barouche. At dinner, in spite of all Lady Pomeroy's manœuvres, she was sure to see Trevor seated between his sister and Agnes. At the Opera, she might as well have attempted to have removed the pillars of Hercules from their station, as have frowned or hinted Trevor out of her box ; for nothing less than main force could have ejected him from the position which he took up every Tuesday and Saturday night of the season, behind the cane-bottomed chair of Agnes. At quadrille parties, if Lady Pomeroy left her *ecarté* table for a moment, she was sure to see Trevor *pas de basque*-ing or *dos-a-dos*-ing with Agnes. In short, go where she would, he was still there ; and in the very places where she had calculated he could gain no admittance, the first face she was sure to see was the eternally smiling one of Charles Trevor.

To give one instance of his perseverance :—One night, after the opera, the Fleming carriage was very late. It rained hard ; the crush

room was crammed to suffocation. Trevor had Agnes in one arm and his sister in the other. Lady Pomeroy was fretting and pining at the delay. At length, when the carriage was announced, there was not another party left in the house but her own. Trevor had been unremitting in his attentions, and having waited thus long, he calculated on supping at Mr. Fleming's, where there was generally a small select party after the opera. Lady Pomeroy was, however, at last determined, under the influence of her ill-temper, to give him the cut direct: and therefore the moment he had put her into the carriage, which she always contrived that he should do the last, that she might prevent any little leave-taking which young lovers are apt to indulge in, she gave him a cold bow, and drew up the glass. Trevor, who had not only calculated on being one of the supper party, but also that he might make the fifth in Mr. Fleming's coach, and in consequence had ordered his cabriolet to Grosvenor Square at two, looked and felt any way but pleasantly as the carriage lamps flashed by him in their swift

career, and left him standing in the midst of a pouring rain, and just under a water-spout. "This is gratitude," thought Trevor; "but never mind, I'll not be outdone," said he, mentally. He looked about, not a hackney-coach appeared. Every link was gone out, and every link-boy gone home. He was still, however, determined not to be cut. There was nothing for him, but dash-splash through mud and mire, which he accordingly did at such a quick pace, that he arrived at Grosvenor Square before the carriage, which had gone round to set Lady Emily down.

Drenched to the skin, he immediately made his way to Mr. Fleming's library, who having been engaged at home, was waiting the return of the Opera party; but a short time elapsed before the carriage drew up to the door.

Lady Pomeroy, who was congratulating herself that at length she had got rid of Trevor, at least for one night, led the way gaily to the drawing-room. "O my dear brother," exclaimed she, "such a night, and such stupid servants not to bring the carriage before; and that eternal Mr. Trevor——" At this moment,

the person whom she had taken for her brother turned round, and displayed Charles Trevor himself, in a full suit of Mr. Fleming's clothes. "Bless me, Mr. Trevor!"—"Yes, my dear Lady Pomeroy, here I am: knew you had forgotten to ask me to supper—knew you'd be sorry for it when you recollected it—so I came to save you the pain of repentance—got wet through—borrowed a suit of Mr. Fleming's—and here I am."

Lady Pomeroy stammered something about "regret and pleasure;" Amelia looked placid as usual; Agnes smiled at his assurance, and laughed at his grotesque appearance in her papa's clothes; and the party went to supper. Lady Pomeroy quite discomfited, and almost giving up the contest—so dead beat was she by the perseverance and the perpetual good-temper with which Trevor met every rebuff.

Such decided attentions as these could not of course pass unnoticed in a world where so many make a much greater practice of attending to the affairs of other people than to their own. Public report, with busy tongue, soon set down

a match between Trevor and Agnes as a determined thing, in spite of all the assertions to the contrary made everywhere by Lady Pomeroy : who, indeed, made it one great business of her life to contradict this surmise, and to proclaim that her niece's hand was still disengaged ; and that she was free to receive any proposals of marriage from any person of a certain rank and fortune.

In the mean time, the other personages of our drama were not idle. Lady Emily's heart and affections were courted and earnestly sought after by the persevering attentions of Mr. Hartley ; and esteem for his character was, unknown to herself, gradually ripening into a warmer feeling : so that there were many who knew them, who predicted that only a little time was requisite to transform Lady Emily Trevor into Lady Emily Hartley. But this she most pertinaciously denied when she was accused of it.

Hartley was one of those young men of fortune, of whom we have at present very few. He considered it to be a duty he owed to his te-

nants to reside a certain portion of the year on his estate, to redress their grievances, and look after their affairs himself, instead of leaving their fate in the hands of some mercenary agent.

The consequence was, that his tenants were happy, never over-rented, and loved their landlord. His oaks and elms still flourished in his forests, and still decorated his park ; for no London dissipation and extravagance had condemned them to the axe. His income, though not so great in nominal amount, was more in reality than that of several whose rent-rolls showed double the sum that his did ; because there was no rent fixed on farmers, which their produce did not enable them to pay : and Hartley derived more pleasure from the smiling faces of his happy tenantry as he rode through his estate, than he could ever have received from the possession of a few more thousands per annum, produced from their cares and labours.

In short, Hartley was a good specimen of an English country gentleman—not one of your roaring, drinking, fox-hunting squires, who

live on their own estates, because they are out of their element, and unendurable everywhere else—but an ornament to the unpaid magistracy of the country—an independent representative of the county in which he was born, and which contained his property, and in every respect a man formed to be one of the pillars of the third estate in the constitution of England.

But with all this, Hartley had but little sentiment; and Agnes often rallied her friend in the possession of such a mere matter-of-fact lover. He, however, had a fund of good feeling in his heart; and though incapable of that frippery of affection which evaporates in display, he had all the elements of a wholesome and manly love in his composition, and the whole of those elements were engrossed by Lady Emily.

His was not a character to shine in the ordinary course of society; but there were qualities in it which gave a certain resource in all times of difficulty and trouble in the long perfection of existence. He was a man upon whom a woman might safely calculate to find an affectionate and constant protector; and a husband

whose love would out-last the gratification of his passion. In short, Hartley was one of those sterling characters that make their way with sensible people ; one who would be described as the best creature in the world by one part of it, and a most insufferable bore by the other.

He had made no impression upon Lady Emily at first ; her mind and heart were too romantic in their ideas to conceive any thing like love at first sight for such a man as Mr. Hartley. But in her progress through society, when she compared the sterling qualities of his heart and the good sense of his conversation with the more shining, but more superficial, accomplishments of others, her reason invariably decided the comparison in his favour in spite of herself.

She saw, too, the dangerous tendency of giving way to the warmth of feeling in the contemplation of the character of her friend ; and in time found in the candour and honesty of Hartley, which never permitted any fault of hers to pass without a remark that was calculated to correct it, something more solid to admire and be pleased at, than at ~~the~~ flattery by which she

was assailed by a host of more gay and fashionable adorers.

But this increasing influence of Hartley she still pettishly denied, and never acknowledged it even to herself. Her young imagination had dressed up a creature of its own conception as the man who was to rob her heart of its first love ; and Hartley was not at all such a man as she had imagined.

“ Besides,” she would say, “ what lover ever hoped to succeed by telling his mistress of her faults?—doubtless she had many,” (and this was said with a becoming look of humility,)—“ but a lover ought to be blind to them, at any rate. There were enough envious people who hated her in the world to point out her defects, without a man who professed himself her admirer giving himself that trouble.”

Hartley bore all the rebuffs she gave him with patience, because she never forbade the continuance of his suit ; and he had too much tact to risk any decided refusal by any decided proposition. But yet he felt he was gaining ground, or at least flattered himself so ; and he there-

fore still continued, contrary to his nature, to pursue her from opera to route, and from party to party : though there was not a place that did not teem with heart-aches for him, as he saw her ear engrossed by the witticisms of one, of the heroism of another, or of the flattery of a third. Dancing, too, was out of the question with him ; and he was therefore condemned to watch her through all the movements of her quadrille, and to feel a twinge every time he saw her hand clasped in that of her partner. Lady Emily, however, almost unconsciously avoided as much as possible all occasions of giving him pangs of this nature.

A secret presentiment that, in spite of the opposition in their present tempers and pursuits, she would one day be his, induced him still to pursue a manner of life which he despised, that he might have his eye continually upon her ; and though he never sacrificed his candour in her praise, he did not confine his observations merely to her faults : till Lady Emily at length began to relish praise from Hartley with a feeling of pleasure, at which she was herself surprised. As to

her other admirers, they had no fear of Hartley. He was too plain, too unassuming a person to give them any idea of a dangerous rival ; if the thought crossed their mind that he loved her, it was accompanied by a supercilious smile, and a mental comparison between him and themselves, which of course ended much in their own favour. They could never imagine that the country-gentleman, as he was called, could have any attractions for the gay and beautiful Lady Emily Trevor, and they laughed when her brother would sometimes state his opinion, that the tortoise would win the race at last.

For his own part, Hartley had in truth often repented the circumstance of his falling in love with a being apparently so dissimilar to himself, and lamented that he had not stifled his passion at its commencement ; but it was now too late : Lady Emily had become necessary to his happiness, and he was determined to persevere while there was the slightest hopes of success.

Wherever, therefore, Lady Emily went, there also was Hartley, watching her with the anxious eye of a guardian lover ; sometimes en-

dured, often scolded, but always attentive. He would designate himself her Mentor—she called him her tormentor; but in spite of their numerous disagreements, their hearts were coming to a better understanding every day, and Lady Emily felt herself better and better pleased, and much more gratified by the honest, ardent attachment of the plain Mr. Hartley, than she did with the fulsome attentions and flattery of a dozen others, who ranked themselves among the finest young men about town.

At this period, one of Mr. Fleming's boroughs becoming vacant, Henry Pomeroy was recalled from the Continent, where he had been travelling since he had taken his degrees at Oxford, to fill the vacant seat, and to accomplish the project of his mother and uncle, by marrying Amelia.

An alternate series of dissipation and study had driven Miss Wheeler from his heart, indeed from his remembrance. Still, when his thoughts recurred to that adventure, a burning blush would mount into his cheek, and his mortified vanity reëuse him into invectives

against the whole sex. Her deception had indeed given a dreadful chill to the warm feelings of his heart, and from that period till the present, he had been utterly indifferent to women. The sight of Amelia, however, whose beauty was really of the first order, and the idea that she was destined for his wife, once more made him feel that he had a heart capable of loving; and the moment that this was felt, the natural impetuosity of his character returned.

His senses were captivated with the beauty of his cousin; and deeming the coldness of her disposition to arise from mere maiden bashfulness, he entered with avidity into the schemes of his mother, as far as it regarded his union with Amelia.

Not so, however, with respect to the political schemes for the aggrandisement of the family, projected by Mr. Fleming. As to the change of name from Pomeroy to Fleming, that was perfectly indifferent to him, but in all the points of political opinion, they were as far asunder in their ideas as the antipodes.

Young, ardent, and impetuous, Henry thought, acted, and spoke, upon the principal points of modern politics, with a freedom of discussion that astonished and alarmed Mr. Fleming, who had never thought at all, but blindly followed in the track pursued by whoever happened to be in power.

Catholic Emancipation—Parliamentary Reform—the Abolition of Slavery—the Reduction of Taxes—the March of Intellect—were the themes upon which Henry Pomeroy indulged, in the full power of youthful eloquence; and Mr. Fleming trembled, lest the schemes of ambition which he had been so long pursuing, should be destroyed by the maiden speech of his nephew.

These schemes had gradually increased in their extent, as he had felt the accumulation of his influence, since his accession by purchase to two more boroughs; and dreading lest the impetuosity of Henry's temper might undo all that he had been so long doing, he called him into the library to detail the whole of his projects. In this conversation, no longer content with a

baronetcy, he stated that he had not only hinted at his expectations of a peerage, with a remainder to his nephew, but that it had actually been promised him; and this, accompanied by such talents as Henry possessed, he foresaw might lead to the highest honours of the state.

Upon his favourite topic, even Mr. Fleming could be eloquent, and he pourtrayed to Henry all the splendours and advantages which awaited his adoption of the same political opinions with himself. Henry, however, was obstinate; he would submit to no compromise. If he accepted a seat in parliament, it must be with complete independence as to his “ayes and noes.”

It was in vain that Mr. Fleming attempted to show the absurdity and folly of playing a game by which he could get nothing. Henry was obstinate, till his uncle, for the first time in his life, fell into a passion, dismissed him with violence, and determining to marry again, and have an heir of his own, to accomplish those darling schemes of ambition, which he had so long contemplated with delight, went to bed,

and was found by his servant the next morning dead. Such an unusual event as a fit of passion had thrown the blood into his head, and occasioned apoplexy; and thus ended all the ambitious schemes of Mr. Fleming.

END OF VOL. I.

